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GUINEA GIRL

NORMAN DAVEY



er



ROBERT AND SMITH'S
"F BOOKS"
MAIN ST.
★ OHIO

15. 11. 1900

GUINEA GIRL

NORMAN DAVEY

**Ο Ζεὺς τὴν Δανάην χρυσοῦ, κᾶγα δὲ σὲ χρυσοῦ·
πλείονα γὰρ δοῦναι τοῦ Διὸς οἶ δύναμαι.**

GUINEA GIRL

A MELODRAMA IN THREE ACTS,
TOGETHER WITH THE INCIDENTAL
MUSIC, HERE PRESENTED FOR THE
ENTERTAINMENT OF THE CURIOUS

BY

NORMAN DAVEY

AUTHOR OF "THE PILGRIM & A SMILE," ETC.



NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

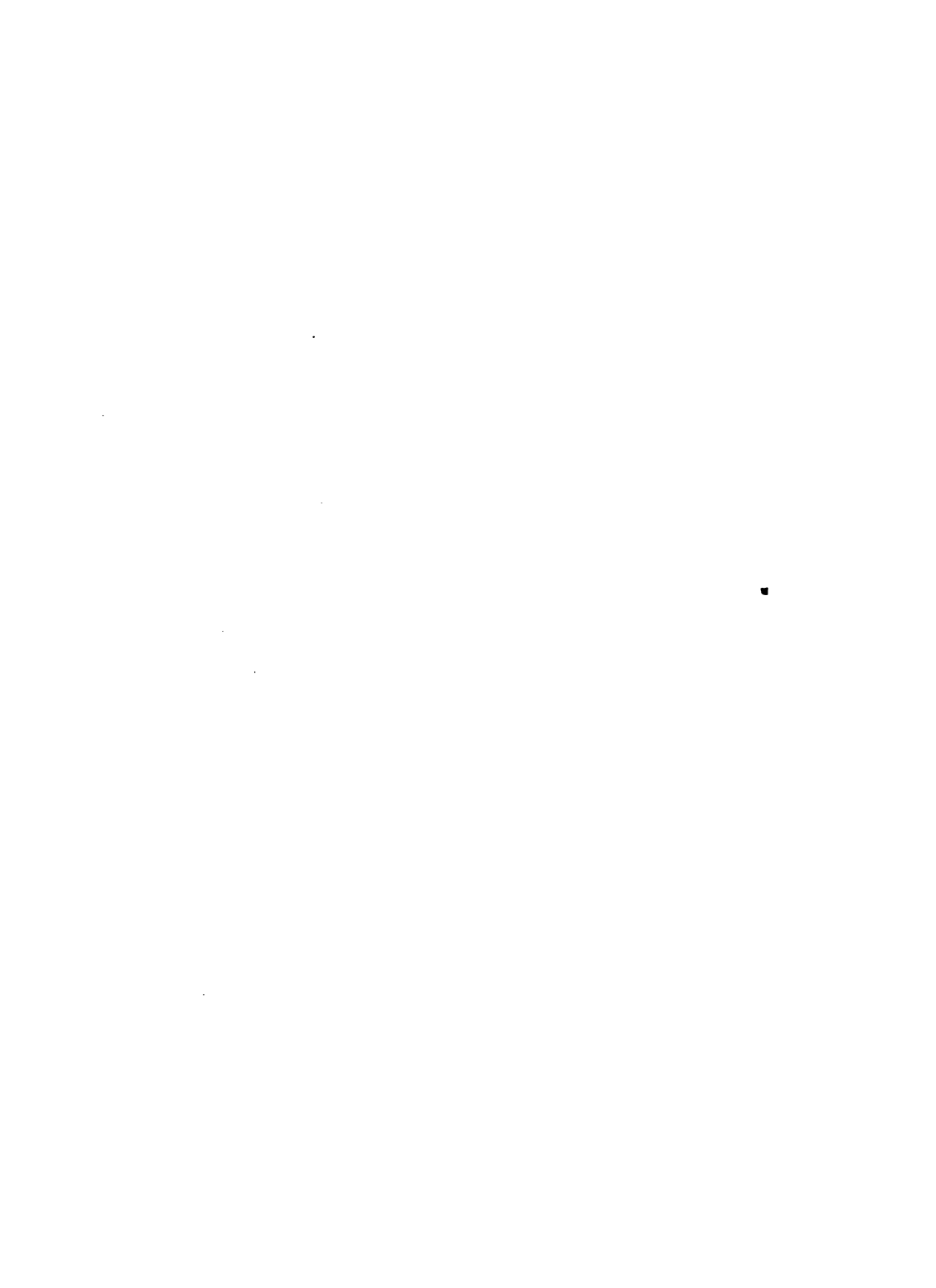
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

**TO ARTHUR
AND TO ALEC WAUGH
AND TO ONE CYNTHIA**



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PRELUDE IN A MINOR KEY

Il y a un demi-siècle, on le confessait franchement et l'on proclamait que la nature aime la simplicité; elle nous a donné depuis trop de démentis.

Henri Poincaré.

PRELUDE IN A MINOR KEY

“**V**ENUS,” said the Astronomer at breakfast, “*has* a satellite.”

“I wish,” said the wife of the Astronomer, “that you wouldn’t dip your toast in your coffee like that. It’s so messy. There, you’ve made three drops on the tablecloth already—and it’s dripping on your coat now. If you *must* soak your toast in your coffee, why don’t you use the spoon? This cloth has only been on the table for three days, and. . . .”

“My dear, you don’t understand. This is the greatest discovery. . . . A revolution, my dear. I shall be remembered. . . . Cassini was right, after all. Belopolsky is a bungler and Schiaparelli a fool. I shall be known. . . . ‘Bellamy’s Satellite’! I must write to the *Times* at once.”

“That tablecloth was clean on Tuesday—and look at it now!”

But Horace Bellamy had no mind for tablecloths, and the only spots that he knew of were to be seen (through a tube) many million miles away upon the sun, upon migratory planets and upon fixed stars.

“I must write to the *Times* about it,” he repeated. He stared at the bacon on his plate, which had grown cold with neglect, with unseeing eyes. “I had better run up to town to-morrow and see Gresson: I must catch the 8.31. My dear, I shall want breakfast to-morrow at 7.30. It is most important that I should. . . .”

"Your bacon's getting cold," said Mrs. Bellamy.

Paul said nothing. He ate his egg very slowly and between mouthfuls gazed wide-eyed out of the window. The beech tree at the end of the lawn was all green and gold in the spring sunshine. A little mist still lay in the middle distance in the hollow below High Wood and remembered places were strange with morning mystery. A snowy cumulus hung in the blue square of the upper half of the window like a tree-shape on a Wedgwood bowl: in the lower frame, blue and gold crocuses and white snowdrops flamed like stars on the black earth of the flower beds. If one followed the garden path to its far end beyond the juniper trees and through the Gate to Nowhere, across Dearmer Bottom and through High Wood and Wych Wood up on to Fritham Down, one came to the scarps above the Arwell and caves in rock. Outside the largest and finest of these caves, upon the stony shelf above the stream, crouched a figure, bending over a wood fire. The figure was clad in a pair of blue serge football shorts and a white (but not too white) cotton shirt: its bare knees were stained with earth and scratched by the brambles of Wych Wood. Its mop of red-brown hair glinted like copper in the sunlight; and although to others' seeming here was but a holiday schoolboy, to the eyes of the informed, Pha-Mee, King of the Cave-Men, sat at the mouth of his cave and guarded the tribal fire.

This picture was very clear in the mind of Paul as he sat at table and ate, delicately, at his egg. Spots on the skin of a leopard: on a linnet's egg: on the tops of toadstools: on the divining stone, fire-heated and water-cooled: round impress of Wooden-leg: Friday footprints in the sand: such maculae as these alone held

Paul's interest: for spots on tablecloths and spots on stars or in telescopes he had no use.

The Science of Astronomy is, of its nature, a big affair. The very aids to knowledge are, in this instance, large: bloated contraptions grown out of due compass. The practitioner herein deals with entities out of all imagination. A million miles is a bagatelle, and other suns, hung in the immeasurable void, out-distance and outnumber our one Sun of this our Solar System, so as to be numbered and easily forgotten among the host of stars. The watcher of these and of the planets and satellites of the Circus in which Earth revolves, crouched upon his high stool with eye glued to the end of a tube colossus, precesses slowly round as Earth moves, for all the world like some fly a-perch upon the minute hand of a grandfather's clock. Observatories are big houses underneath the domes of which observers become diminutive, and even those of unofficial students are not small. Horace Bellamy was not a rich man (or it had been larger still) yet the white dome at the bottom of his garden overtopped the juniper trees; and any imaginative bird flying in the blue sky above it might well have believed that the Great Roc had at last laid an egg.

If those who study the habits of bacilli through lenses immersed in oil, following the life of *streptococci* (enlarged so many thousand diameters) across the microscopic field, might with reason be believed to be small men; those others, who record the destinies of stars, might be thought to be big men, of a presence to command, of some material aspect to the will to power.

Be the truth of this as it may, Mr. Horace Bellamy did not conform to this rule, and the microcosm rather than the macrocosm might more fittingly have

held his attention. For he was a little man, with weak blue eyes, an indeterminate chin, a ragged moustache and an uncertain manner. Size in body and force of character were centred in his wife, who was a large woman with a face like a horse. But, perhaps, this stellar heretic (for to doubt Barnard and Russell and the others is sheer heresy) was not so competent an astronomer as the Vicar and Dr. Fairweather and Miss Nasely and the dwellers in and around Gatton-Thorn-dyke were ready to believe, for Horace Bellamy was one of those many enquirers in science who flourished in an amiable and futile fashion during the latter decades of the nineteenth century: the agreeable (and at times disagreeable) product of the Victorian boom in things scientific, a lack of education and an adequate patrimony. For between the years 1860 and 1890 there were in England a great number of middle-aged and elderly gentlemen of independent means (Horace Bellamy's father successfully launched the Belamy Electric Belt) who wasted their time and neglected their social responsibilities and bored their friends in the pursuit of sciences, of the principles of which they were ignorant and in the methods of which they were inept. Mr. Horace Craik Bellamy was one of these, so Mrs. Bellamy (who had brought three children into the world) may be forgiven for taking but small notice of what her husband saw (or thought he saw) through a telescope.

"The older astronomers," began Horace Bellamy, "may not have had, indeed had not, the perfected apparatus that we have to-day. Schröter, indeed. . . ."

But neither Paul nor Mrs. Bellamy were listening to the astronomer. The latter was busy with the coffee-pot (a complicated earthenware affair in two parts) in

conserving the remainder coffee for after-dinner consumption that evening. The former was occupied with Pha-Mee and the Economy of Fire, when he was suddenly brought back to the here and now by the sound of his name.

"Yes, dad," he said absently.

"Bower must hear of this. I want you to bicycle over to Dayton this morning with a note to Dr. Bower. You know his house—the one behind the church, with the big iron gates. . . ."

"But, dad . . ."

Paul put his half-eaten piece of toast down on his plate and stared across the table at his father. His big eyes were round and full of trouble.

"But what?"

"But I can't go. I've . . ."

"You'll do as you're told," said Mrs. Bellamy, looking up from the coffee-pot.

"But I can't, *really* . . ."

"You've nothing to do this morning. You must do . . ."

"But I'm going over to Wrenham Valley this morning."

"Paul," said his father, "you must take this note to Dr. Bower. It's very important he should know at once. . . . He may have missed it last night, and his instrument is not . . ."

"But," interrupted Paul.

"You can go to Wrenham to-morrow."

"But . . . but, to-morrow won't do. I . . ."

"Why won't to-morrow do?" asked Mrs. Bellamy.

"Because . . . because," began Paul, and then stopped. He remembered that he could not explain to his father and mother precisely why to-morrow would

not do as well as to-day. They did not know Reena-Daa. They did not know that he knew Reena-Daa, whose name (among grown-ups) was Cecily and who lived (also among grown-ups) in the house on the hill above Wrenham Church, but who in real life was Reena-Daa, Queen of the Cave Men and consort to Pha-Mee.

"Because—I arranged to go to-day," ended Paul, lamely.

"Well, you can't go to-day," said Mrs. Bellamy, finally, "you've got to take that note over to Dayton."

"I'll go and write it at once," said Horace Bellamy, as he rose from the table; "it will be ready for you in half an hour."

Paul left the dining-room and walked gloomily into the garden. He no longer saw the great white clouds that hung in so jolly and drunken a fashion in the sky. Nor did he see the crocuses and snowdrops in the flower-beds or the gossamer above the grass or the hedgehog that had crept out of its winter quarters under the wood-pile to enjoy the spring sunshine, forgetful for the nonce of dog or boy or any other thing. Nor even did he see Spot, the fox-terrier, who danced around him and then ran away with a broken stick in his mouth, waiting for Paul to play with him. For all Paul could see at the moment was Reena-Daa, a deserted and pathetic figure alone upon the stony shelf above the waters of the Arwell: alone before the charred remains of the day before yesterday's wood fire. He pictured Cecily then outside the large cave—or rather, as she would be there at eleven o'clock—waiting and waiting vainly for him to come down over the hill and join her: a pathetic figure with a small Peter-Pannish face, a mass of black curly hair, a blue serge skirt and black stockings, one of

which had come half-down and lay in wrinkles around the leg. Surely a pathetic figure; for it is over-young to be deserted and a queen at the age of nine.

He had promised to be there—he had promised very faithfully to be there; and he was to bring with him a small medicine bottle of paraffin (which he had begged off Jane) with which to set the fire alight in a becoming manner. And he was also going to bring with him his largest and latest catapult, which George, the gardener's boy at the Manor House, had secretly helped him to make.

With so fine a fire and so deadly a weapon, what wild beast, mammoth or mastodon, would dare come near the cave: or what enemy tribe would attempt to storm the stronghold of Pha-Mee and Reena-Daa, his queen? And now Reena-Daa—poor Cecily of the unruly hair—would be alone on the cold rock before no fire; and she would have to eat by herself the peppermints that she was to bring for them, to eat together, and the pheasant feathers that cook had saved for her she would have to wear in her hair alone and unadmired. Paul glared at the dark jutting rocks and the white dome of the observatory behind them and very nearly wept.

Horace Bellamy came down the garden path towards Paul. He held a letter in his hand.

"Here you are, Paul," he said. "You know Dr. Bower's house? You'd better get off at once."

"Oh, but, dad—won't it do to-morrow?"

"No: no. I must go to town to-morrow. Dr. Bower must have this at once. It's very important. He may not have seen it. It will be clear to-night, but the glass is dropping, and Venus may not be visible to-morrow night."

Paul put the letter in his pocket and walked away

dejectedly towards the small outhouse, part workshop and part tool-shed, where he kept his bicycle.

He pumped up the tyre, viciously, in jerks, and a few minutes later turned out of the garden path into the road, with head bent low over the handle-bars of the machine, and upon his lips a plaint against all astronomers, royal or otherwise, and in his heart a hatred of all moons, planets and stars.

* * * * *

The Rector of Dayton is (or was, for he is now dead) concerned only with God and his garden—the rectory garden, that is. Of the garden of God in which (as he was wont to confess) he was an unskilled labourer, he knew but little more than the names of the weeds. He was not an efficient weed-killer, and he was accustomed to solace himself, of an evening, with Cockburn and a quotation of Matthew xiii. 29. The rooting up of tares is an uneasy business which is best left in the hands of God. The Rector was a theologian and a gardener, and had been something of a scholar in his day. In the rectory garden there were no weeds. The Rev. the Honourable Julian Carthorpe-Greame saw to that.

He was busy on one sunny day in early spring on the outer edge of his garden, where the ground rose twelve feet or more above the lane leading up to the house of Dr. Bower, upon a hedge of clipped box. It was a hedge of which he was proud and he stood before a box bush, shaped into the form of a bird, with a huge pair of garden shears in his hand. The trimming of this was not a matter to be left to any common gardener paid by the week: the Rector always saw to it himself.

As he stood thus, hovering, shears in hand, over

this twig and that, he caught sight, above the level top of the hedge, of a small figure pushing a bicycle up the lane. It was the figure of a boy of some twelve years of age, clad in a white jersey and blue serge shorts. He was bare-headed and his crop of red-brown hair gleamed, almost metallically, in the sunshine. The Rector did not know him as any dweller in Dayton, and wondered idly whence he came.

The boy was plainly unhappy. His eyes were sullen, and a frown had lined his small forehead with a number of wrinkles. His lips moved as he muttered to himself while he pushed his bicycle up the steep slope of the road. He passed directly underneath where the Rector stood so that that priest heard very distinctly the words which the small boy repeated to himself as he walked.

"Damn Venus—damn Venus—damn Venus: damn your old Venus: damn, damn, damn Venus . . ." A monotonous commination.

The good rector stared after the small figure as it pushed the bicycle onwards up the hill. His shears hung unused from his right hand. He had forgotten, altogether, about his box hedge. Not, perhaps, in just those words, nor in this place beneath the pagan sky of spring, but officially in pulpit, had he said as much himself—and more. But this, too, he seemed to have forgotten. For this Christian with a bicycle seemed too young rightly to condemn those who were once (and maybe are still) gods or goddesses.

"Retinebant nugae nugarum et vanitates vanitatum, antiquae amicae meae, et succutiebant vestem meam carneam et submurmurabant: 'dimittisne nos?'" he murmured. "He is but a boy: a child to talk thus . . . it is not right that he should . . ."

He stared out into the road until the boy and the bicycle had passed out of sight beyond the bend in the lane.

"*Veni Karthaginem,*" he muttered—"I, also, came to Carthage—once—*et circumstrepebat me undique sargato flagitiosorum amorum.*"

He was silent for a moment, and then, with a thrush hidden in the flowers of an almond tree near by as accompanist, he began to repeat in an altogether different voice:

"ipsa gemmis purpurantem pingit annum floridis;
ipsa turgentes papillas de favoni spiritu
urget in nodos tepentes; ipsa roris lucidi,
noctis aura quem relinquit, spargit umentes aquas.
cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.

illa cantat, nos tacemus: quando ver venit meum?
quando flam uti chelidon ut tacere desinam?
perdidi musam tacendo. . . .

—*nos tacemus*—we are, indeed, mute."

He sighed, and, lifting up his shears, cut off a twig which had just broken out into bud.

"In silence have I lost my Muse . . ."

The Rector sighed again, while he clipped perfunctorily at his box hedge. He had wholly forgotten the boy and the bicycle.

The boy, however, continued to climb the hill and to curse Venus.

Who shall say that he was not heard? That Cytherea has no ears to hear? That the Cyprian has fallen asleep and may not be awakened? That Venus is dead? That Alitta, Astarte—name her how you will—may so

be spat upon by a small boy with impunity? That Aphrodite—*Ἀφροδίτη πάνδημος*—does not pay her debts?

Not, certainly, the Rev. the Hon. Julian Carthorpe-Greame, alone and lonely in his garden . . . nor the chronicler of these events.

PRELUDE IN A MAJOR KEY

All heaven, in every baby born,
All absolute of earthly leaven,
Reveals itself, though man may scorn
All heaven.

A. C. Swinburne.

PRELUDE IN A MAJOR KEY

THE Traveller stood in the middle of the *col*, leaning upon his staff. His ruck-sack, bulged out of all shape and discoloured by rain and travel, lay, as it had fallen from his shoulders, on the snow. He stood very still, for nearly a minute, gazing down the snow track, which ran away to be lost among the larches a hundred feet below.

The snow lay banked high on each side of him. The blue sky above him was unsullied by any cloud, undimmed by any mist. The snow underneath his feet gleamed and sparkled in the hot sunshine. Already, even now and here, where the mountain road ran highest, the white snow crystals fell into water drops: sun-
alchemied from pearl to diamond as he watched. At intervals of seconds, small masses of snow detached themselves from the banks at the roadside to fall with a little rustling noise into the roadway; and, among the larch trees below, a greater mass would, now and again, slip from the weighted branch with a crash that echoed faintly where he stood in the *col* above. Already the black stems and twigs of the larches were breaking out into green needles. High up and unseen in the blue vault above him, a lark sang; alone, with the echoes of the snow fall, breaking the great silence of the hills. Spring had come.

The Traveller took off his hat and threw it down against his ruck-sack. He drew a handkerchief from

his coat pocket and mopped his brow. The last hour of his climb had been heavy work.

He dropped his staff, and, sitting down on the snow beside his hat and sack, slewed around his water-bottle from where it hung on his back. He took out the cork and drank.

He sighed contentedly, knowing that happiness which only comes to those who walk on the high hills alone. For five minutes or more he sat there, seeing but the blue sky and the snow and the dark woods, happily forgetful of the dust and litter of a solicitor's office—evidence of so many dusty lives. His mind was clear of thought: like a room, swept and empty except for sunlight and the wind in at the window.

Presently, he rose and shouldered his sack. He stuffed his soft felt hat into a pocket and, picking up his long staff, strode bare-headed down towards the woods below.

"And every prospect pleases, and only man is vile," he muttered to himself, as he swung his stick around him raising miniature snow clouds where the iron spike of it struck the banks about him.

An hour later he was through the larch woods. He had dropped several hundred feet. He no longer walked on snow. The roadway of red earth and gravel lay bare in the sunshine, and down it, now in the middle and now to this side and that, ran a pigmy river, a crystal stream that splashed and bubbled joyfully about the pebbles and fragments of rock which lay in its way, to fall, here and there, in a tiny waterfall over a rock outcrop. Around and about him the land lay no longer white with snow. Patches of snow still lay here and there where the shadows were deepest: a pattern of

white and brown like the back of a skewbald pony. And a little later there were flowers. A long bank of pale blue anemones held his attention: frail, delicate blossoms on slender stems, one of which he plucked and threaded into his buttonhole; and a hundred yards further on there was a great clump of yellow daffodils and then some scarlet flowers the name of which he did not know, and about a fallen and rotting tree trunk, an army of purple toadstools, spotted with orange.

The road was now free of the water that had run down it on the higher slopes and a full-grown stream bubbled beside it, now running side by side with it, now swerving away from it with the slope of the land. The larches had given place to birch and ilex, to walnut and to chestnut and to ash, and here and there a beech tree; and, at a bend in the road, where the stream ran into a marshy pool, a clump of tall yellow iris flamed out against the green sedge.

A woodman, with a brown jungle of a beard and a great axe slung over his shoulder with a cord, passed him, and wished him good-day in the harsh *patois* of the country. The Traveller wished him "*Bon jour*" with a good heart and a distressful accent, and, taking a penny whistle from his pocket, began to play upon it as he walked. Had any clerk or client met him as he thus walked, piping unmelodiously, down the hill road, they had hardly recognised the junior partner in the firm of Maclean and Beck, or known one who had the reputation of being a hard man.

The Col. St. Romain is not one of the principal *cols* in this part of the Pyrenees, lying, as it does, upon one of the subsidiary spurs of the mountains. The road which runs over it is a by-road from Ax-la-Vimaine

to the hamlets that lie in the high pasture lands of the Brigaudin and thence, circuitously, by the narrow valley of the Navette, to Ouilz.

Thus the Traveller would be unlikely to meet or to pass many by this road, and indeed the woodman on the further slopes of the Col St. Romain was the only man that the Traveller had seen since he had left Ax early that morning.

But as he came down into the more fertile country, and the woods and scrub gave way to grass-land, signs of man's habitation began to appear. Here and there a rude fence marked a boundary between fields, and in the distance a number of cows stood out against green grass. A bare-footed boy passed him, followed by a mongrel dog. A mile or so away were to be seen the red roofs of a small hamlet. The Traveller glanced at his wrist, about which was strapped a round, silver watch. It lacked some ten minutes to noon. He quickened his pace, for he began to be hungry. A farm cart rumbled past him and a little later he came upon a peasant woman, seated on a bank at the roadside, nursing a baby.

"*Bon jour, M'sieu,*" said the woman, staring at the Traveller with wide open eyes.

"Good-day," replied the Traveller; "what is that village there?"

"Févescan," answered the woman. "You have come from far, M'sieu?"

"From Ax. Is there an inn, there, where I can lunch?"

"It is but a small place, Févescan. There is no inn. But if M'sieu will ask for the house of Père Giroy, Madame will surely give him an omelette and bread and cheese and wine."

"One would not wish for more, Madame. Is it far to Ste. Croix-de-Jarras?"

"But no. From Févescan, about ten kilometres."

"I thank you," replied the Traveller, and he added, "That is a fine baby, that baby of yours, Madame." For the Traveller was a bachelor and a lonely one, and he loved children.

"M'sieu is too kind," murmured the mother. "Ah, and she is hungry, the little one."

"He will grow up to be a great man," said the Traveller. "A soldier, I predict: a Marshal of France, even: who knows?"—for he had missed the gender, as one is apt to do who is neither a Frenchman nor a father.

"She will never be a Marshal, M'sieu," said a voice at his elbow.

He turned to see a man standing beside him. A thick-set fellow, in a rough shirt and breeches, holding a two-pronged fork in his right hand. He had a large, open face like a moon. His brown curly hair pushed its way out under his hat. The downy beginnings of a beard clung to his chin. His small black eyes twinkled as he repeated:

"She will never be a Marshal, my daughter."

"Ah, it is a girl?"

"But yes, M'sieu. Did I not say so?" said the woman, and the peasant and his wife and the Traveller all laughed together. They were quite a young couple: the peasant could hardly have been more than twenty-two or three years old. The wife, the Traveller took to be about the same age, though she might easily have been the elder of the two. In actual fact, she was four years younger than her husband, being just over eighteen. But she was very fair, with pale flaxen hair, parted in the middle and pulled tightly down behind

her ears, and an old-young face which gave no index to her age.

"What is her name?" asked the Traveller.

"Néomi Véronique, M'sieu," replied the mother.

"A big name for so small a person," said the Traveller with a smile.

"You think that?" said the other, gravely—"Oh, but they are beautiful names, and my little one will grow up to be very beautiful."

"But not to be a general," said the peasant, with a chuckle.

"But, indeed, no. She will grow up to be the most beautiful girl in the Brigaudin and she will marry little André, the son of young Morat, whose father has two farms and a house in Cailhes."

"Certainly that will be so," said the Traveller, "and André will be a very lucky fellow. *Matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior*, Madame."

"Pardon, M'sieu?"

"I spoke in the Latin tongue. It means that she will be more beautiful even than her beautiful mother."

"But I am not beautiful," said the girl, turning her big eyes wonderingly on the Traveller.

"It is a great thing, M'sieu, to have education," said the peasant. "Now, if I had been taught things, I would not stay in this place and cart manure for Père Hérival. One is shut in here; one has no chance. I would go down to the big towns—to Perpignan (I was once there): to Tarbes. But to live and die in this hole of a place—bah!"

"But it is the most beautiful spot," cried the Traveller—"the most beautiful place I have ever seen."

"Yet M'sieu does not live here," said the peasant, drily.

"I see you are something of a philosopher," replied the Traveller, "but I must be walking on, or there will be no eggs or cheese left for me, and I am hungry. Good luck to you, and may Néomi Véronique grow up to be most lovely, and may great good fortune go with her. Adieu."

The Traveller strode down the road towards Févescan, and presently sat at the rough long table in the house of Giroy and ate an omelette and drank some rough red wine. Afterwards, he smoked a pipe, and fell into a sombre mood. There grew in his heart a great and bitter envy of the peasant, who had so sweet a wife and so fine a baby; and, sitting at the road edge, eating his cheese and bread, the peasant in turn envied the Traveller, who could talk Latin as well as Father Antoine and who had leisure and money to travel and who was, without doubt, a milord in England; and Néomi Véronique, lying in her mother's lap, gurgled happily in the face of heaven and envied nobody.

ACT I: HALF A LOAF

"Monte Carlo, beautifully situated in a sheltered bay to the N. of Monaco, has a charming climate, but the chief attraction is the Casino. . . ."

Karl Baedeker.

CHAPTER I: THE RAMPARTS OF A WORLD

THERE is this to be said (I think) in any undertaking—that one should begin well. For when you have travelled thus far on your journey, you will be asked whence you have come. It is a great thing to be proud to answer that question: to be able to say—"I know this is but a poor place to be in; yet I started from . . ." and to name some place which will raise you at once in the estimate of your listeners. It is a great thing to be able to do that and so I am pleased to begin this history (which is the history of a journey) in the same place where Mr. Yorick and his man La Fleur begin theirs—I mean MONTRIUL (or, if you prefer it, MONTREUIL).

The town of Montreuil is built on the top of a small hill and is completely surrounded with ramparts. For several years during the late European war, this town was the General Headquarters of the British Armies in France. There is thus another good reason (besides the example of Sterne) for choosing this little town for the starting-point of a tale.

On a certain evening towards the end of March, of the year nineteen hundred and nineteen—some five months, that is, after Germany had signed the Armistice with France and her Allies—two soldiers walked and talked on the ramparts of Montreuil.

It was half an hour or more since the sun had set. It was very mild and a warm wind blew fitfully about these high places, rustling the bushes that grew in the

angles of the bastion: bustling now and again down the narrow cobbled streets: rattling the booths in the market-place, and unfurling the blue and red flag above the doorway of the École Militaire. Masses of fleecy cloud trailed across the darkening sky, rearing fantastic shapes, black against the silver of the west and fading into a common greyness above and in the east.

The two soldiers walked slowly along the western rampart towards the Abbeville gate. They were much like any other two soldiers to be found in the town: one being employed as a groom; the other, as a batman, or officer's servant. They were dressed in the regulation field service khaki jackets, somewhat too loose across the shoulders and too tight over the hips, and their badges and buttons, and the brass studs and buckles of their bandoliers were polished, as such have need to be, in soldiers constantly under the eye of the General Staff. They smoked cigarettes of the kind known as "gaspers" and talked fitfully as they walked. Presently they came to a low wooden bench beneath two trees on the inside of the rampart path and sat down.

"And 'ow do you get on with your bloke?" said the groom, after a brief silence.

"Well, not so bad. Yer see, I've been with 'im some time now, and I know 'is little ways," replied the other, in a strong Cockney accent (he came from Holloway), "and 'e ain't a cold-blooded bleeder like yours is: 'e is a knock-out—ho! my! but 'e is a knock-out!"

"'Ow de yer mean? What sort of knock-out?"

The soldier from Holloway gazed out into the night. He did not see the dim forms of trees and houses that loomed up faintly in the gathering darkness. His mind was uneasy in formulating the abstract.

"Ho! a fair knock-out: yeller boots and wiggle-

woggle cane, and meet me at the Piccadilly Tube sort, when 'e's at home."

"Ah!" said the other, with understanding.

"But I likes 'im, all right: all O.K. and affable—even if 'e gets mixed at times. On the 'ole, I'd rather look after 'im than many I could nime."

The groom nodded. He was a north-countryman and laconic. He took a small yellow paper packet of cigarettes out from the breast pocket of his jacket and lit a fresh cigarette from the stub of the old one.

"A brass 'at, ain't 'e?"

"Yus. Not 'igh up, yer know, jest a Staff capting."

"What's 'e in?"

"Ho Bee."

"O.B. What's that?"

"You know—the training branch. Dahn in that big building at the back of the Staff Offices—other side of the back yard—jest under the ramparts."

"Well, what does 'e do there?"

"Nah yer asking."

"Stick them little pins in maps, or . . ."

"Nah! Training the Army. That's what 'e does. Yer know—drill and things."

"Ah understand—'e does drill and that."

"Nah—staff blokes don't drill. 'E don't work: 'e's a *norganiser*."

The groom spat contemptuously. For some little time the two men smoked in silence. Footsteps sounded along the ramparts, and the men jumped up and stood at attention as two officers walked past.

"Not so much as touched their bleeding 'ats. 'Aughty 'ogs: I 'ates 'em. Never see yer—unless yer don't salute and then yer gets the glad eye. Mr. Bloody 'Assistant Adjutant-General, one of 'em was—and the

other was your bloke. Why don't they say 'Don't git up,' or 'sit dahn' or something? What I says is, there's no 'arm in decent manners—not even in an orficer. My bloke may be a Owen Nares or a Duggie bleeding Fairbanks, but if 'e meets me out 'ere, like this so to speak, when I'm orf duty, and I gets up—as I always does—being disciplined—'e'll say, 'Sit dahn, White, sit dahn,' returning my salute proper as might be. I 'ates yer bleeding 'aughty 'ogs!"

"But you say 'e worrits at times?"

"Yes."

"'Ow do you mean, worrits?"

"Well, 'e's like this, yer see. 'E's one of these dressing up kind as messes abaht 'is clothes. 'E even 'as one of them folding things as keeps the creases in yer slacks. And 'as 'is top boots rubbed wiv' a bone of an 'orse to polish 'em—and 'is spurs . . ."

"But I 'aven't seen 'im out ridin, and 'e don't come up to stables . . ."

"Nah! Why, 'e ain't no rider: 'e's only got the brains to fall orf."

"I 'ates your London 'orseman."

" . . . and this plice is stiff wiv' 'em. But Belamy ain't so dusty to look after, if you're not moving abaht."

"Well, what's the matter then?"

"Why, what 'e carries abaht wiv' 'im is a bleeding bazaar. All kinds of little knick-knacks, what-nots and 'ow-nows. I was wiv' 'im as batman when 'e 'ad a mobile unit: we 'ad motor transport, in course, but I was always packing or unpacking 'is tiddley-bits: like a woman, yer know: bottles . . ."

"Medicine bottles?"

"Nah! Scent bottles and hair oil and little pots of cream stuff ter put on yer face when yer shave, and half-a-dozen razors, one for every day in the week. And fancy soaps, and a little leather case for 'is collars and gloves and ties, *and* a manicure."

"Manicure? Eh, what's that?"

"Yer know. What they clean their nails wiv'. A little bone thing and a file and little scissors wiv' curved ends . . ."

"'Ere, Jack White, come now!"

"Straight! And you got to pack 'em all up, and unpack 'em and lay 'em all out—so—so as 'e knows exactly where they are. Ho, I tell you, 'e is a fair 'ow do yer do!"

"Well, gentry is funny."

"And then all 'is books."

"Books?"

"Yus. 'E's a literay bloke: that's what 'e is. All sorts of books."

"'Orse management?"

"'Orse management be blowed! Nah: not military books: literay books. Funny sort of books, yer know: po'try and Latin and French books—some of 'em wiv' pictures in 'em: yus, and 'ot stuff too, I can tell yer: like yer can't get in London, 'cause of the police."

"Oh dear!"

"Ho yus, 'e's one of the boys. Looks a fair knock-out when 'e comes back from leave, 'e does."

"Aren't 'e a married man?"

"Nah. But I tell you what. 'E'd like ter be."

"'Ow do you mean, 'e'd like ter be?"

"Well, there's a girl 'ere 'e's sweet on."

"A Frenchie?"

"Nah. 'A Waac: a Norficer Waac."

"In town here?"

"Nah. Over at the D.G.T. Camp. He's fair gorn on 'er 'e is. And 'e's not the only one, neither; not 'arf."

"Wish I was a norficer and 'ad pots of brass: I'd take 'er to chapel, that I would!"

"'E ain't got pots of money."

"Eh? with all them togs and boots and . . ."

"I know 'is sort: 'e ain't no bleedin' orficer when 'e's at 'ome. It's 'er as 'as the money. She's the goods, wiv' a funny foreign name, too—Van't 'Off."

"Eh! My word!"

"Can't say she's my fancy. Too much 'Lord Clarence, I'll meet you in the conservatory,' for me. I like them little Frenchy cuddley ones. They *know* 'ow to love."

"I can never get on wi't lingo, were it never so," said the groom, with a sigh.

"It ain't so 'ard, 'Arry, when you get the 'ang of it. It's the voice of love. I sees Ninette at the *patisserie*, and I ses '*Voulez vous promener avec moi ce soir, Mamzelle?*' And she says . . ."

"Sh—sh," said the other.

The two men jumped to their feet as a tall figure came up along the path towards them.

"Sit down—sit down," said the tall man, in a voice and an accent commonly associated with Balliol. "Ha, is that you, White?"

"Yessir."

"I shall want my best riding boots to-morrow: and see that they are properly polished. I'll be going out to D.G.T. with the General."

"Yessir."

"Good-night, White."

"Good-night, sir."

The tall figure disappeared in the gloom.

"Well, what did I say, 'Arry?" said White.

The groom spat upon the ground, contemptuously.

CHAPTER II: PORTRAIT OF A TEMPORARY GENTLEMAN

IN the years prior to the year 1914 a number of ingenious gentlemen were wont to speculate upon the results of an European war. Their theories may be found (by those curious in the matter) scattered among the reviews and periodicals of the period. Some even wrote whole books to prove a point—that credit would break down at the very opening of hostilities: that London and Paris would be in ruins in a week upon aerial bombardment: that these islands would be blockaded and starved: that the yellow races would overrun Europe: that Biblical prophecies would be fulfilled: that civilisation would crash: that the end of the world would come.

All these gentlemen (as we know) were wrong. The Great European War was, after all, very much like all other wars except that it was a bigger war, in which more guns were used, more ammunition was expended, more money was spent and more men were killed; and it was won at last, as all wars have been won in the end, by the winning side having some men left while the losers had no men left. It was not long-range cannon, nor poison gas: not aerial torpedos, nor directional wireless, nor submarines, nor all the new discoveries in science, nor even that mysterious thing called propaganda, which won the war for the Allies: it was arithmetic.

But if many folk had nothing better to do before

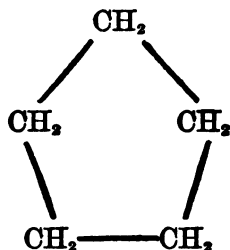
the war than vainly to prophesy about it, there were others who, when war came and we were all in it, talked much of the effect of this state of war on each and all of us. There was the Bishop of Merrow and Thames, who said that the war was making us braver and more self-sacrificing, and whose eloquence and aid to recruiting are beyond all praise. There was the Presbyterian divine, Dr. McCroggin, who hoped much from the limits to luxury imposed by the war. There was Pook, the theosophist, whose tract, "Purification by Fire" was so famous; and Professor Sauxby, who proved that foreign service was making us more and more insular; and Dr. Tibbs, who proved that it was making us more cosmopolitan. Then there was Strutt, the conscientious objector, who showed (until he was put in prison) how war was making us more bellicose; and Tipping, the labour leader, how it was making us more democratic; and Bytter, the Prohibitionist, how it was making us more drunk.

In the reviews and journals of the latter period of the war, will be found much matter relative to the social and moral changes which the war was causing, yet amongst the many and conflicting theories of what the war did for us, it may be safely said that it did one thing: it took a number of young men who had no military learning and made them, or tried to make them, into soldiers. Among them it took Paul Belamy, a year and a half after he had left the University of Oxford.

For a matter of fact, the war (great as its influence admittedly was on every one of us) did not succeed in making Paul into a soldier: it made him (eventually) into a Staff Officer of the third grade, but cer-

tain adventitious factors, only remotely related to war, aided and abetted in this dispensation.

When the call to arms came to Paul (in November, 1914), he was engaged in research upon saturated ring compounds of the type



in a small laboratory in Bloomsbury. He had taken a moderate degree in Physics and Chemistry at Oxford, and he had published (at his own expense) a small pamphlet or brochure upon the metallic compounds with the group $\equiv\text{CH}$. The thesis hardly received the attention in the scientific press which its author had hoped for it. He was an independent and somewhat fitful worker, unattached to any public organisation or private firm.

His father had died during Paul's last year at Oxford. The profits from the Bellamy Electric Belt had ceased for some years and Horace Bellamy died suddenly a few weeks after the company's assets had passed into the hands of the Official Receiver. The house at Gatton-Thorndyke and two telescopes had been sold, and Mrs. Bellamy had gone to live with her married daughter at Raynes Park. Paul came into some three hundred a year from gilt-edged securities upon his father's death, and he made another two hundred a year from occasional contributions to the tech-

nical and scientific press and as a reader in chemistry and physics and allied subjects for the publishing house of Erskine and Garrett. He lived modestly in two small rooms off Russell Square, and was to be found, most days, bending over a distilling flask in the laboratory of the Farimore Institute in Penstimmon Street.

At the outbreak of war, Paul was twenty-three years of age. His tall, slightly stooping figure, crowned with a mop of reddish brown hair, was familiar in Bloomsbury and Soho. His long face, large nose and big, wide-opening eyes were wont to impress the superficial observer, and, in the Café Royal, where he was to be found most evenings after six o'clock, he was commonly taken to be a practitioner of the arts rather than a scientist, an impression that was enhanced by his wearing of a bottle-green velvet jacket, the imbibing of continental liquors and a professed admiration for the genius of the late Mr. Oscar Wilde. But beyond a disposition to talk on all or any subject, a leaning towards the company of the less reputable members of society, a dislike of any ordered work, and a taste in alcohol, he showed little evidence of being a man of letters.

When war was declared, he was not, at once, greatly perturbed. He walked through the rain to Penstimmon Street on the morning of August 5th, with a slight feeling of exaltation. He worked fitfully at his synthesis during the morning and left early to go to the Café Royal. He bought a paper and read the head-lines with an agreeable sense of excitement. It did not occur to him then that he would be, to any great extent, affected himself by the European adventure. He drank Dubonnet with some acquaintances at the Café and was

enthusiastic over the heroism of Belgium and France. But as the weeks passed, his own part in this imbroglio became more apparent. Recruiting posters caught his eye at every turn of the road. Friends of his disappeared from the Café. Recruiting sergeants tapped him on the shoulder. Old ladies stopped him in the street. And a flapper, in a pink hat and a pigtail, gave him a white feather on the top of an omnibus.

Paul Bellamy, however, whatever other faults he may have had, was in no way deceived as to his ability as a soldier. He was not a type of man to endure great stress or hardship or successfully to command other men. He was not, as he had explained at some length to an elderly patriot in white spats on the Underground, a man of action.

Nevertheless, the world remained callous and unconvinced. His work on malonic ester and its derivatives may have been, as he said it was, of great national importance. But he found no one to believe it. He began to look around for some military employment in which use could be made of his special knowledge. After some little trouble, the hunting up of one or two friends in official employment and the recommendation of the professional trade union to which he belonged, he was granted a commission by His Majesty in what then was entitled the Army Service Corps, and a year later he found himself in France as a subaltern attached to a Mobile Repair Unit.

During three years of active service he learnt much. He had a genial manner, considerable powers of adaptation, a social veneer of some durability, the distinction of having been at Sherborne and Balliol, and a real gift for mixing cocktails. He was mentioned in despatches and became a temporary captain in 1917.

Perhaps the most noteworthy thing in Paul's military career was the ease with which he acquired the mannerisms, good and bad, of the regular officer. A tour of employment in the War Office for three months during the autumn of 1918 helped him greatly in this. He learnt to speak of that admirable institution as the "War House"; of his rank as that of a "G.3."; of Sir Matthew Tilden as "Matilda" in a wonderfully natural manner; and in the officers' club at G.H.Q. he was commonly to be seen dining at tables in the company of officers higher in rank than himself. He did not speak to "attached" officers: he was deferential, without being servile, to General officers and very courteous to chief clerks and sergeants-major.

It may be inferred from this very brief account of Bellamy's military service that his career in the army was a comparatively successful one. An appointment as a G.S.O.3. is not perhaps of the highest order, yet it is a creditable achievement in a civilian, but a year or so down from college and with no reputation in the world. Had the war continued, it is possible that Paul might have become, in time, a general staff officer of the second grade.

But the war, to the disgust of Paul Bellamy and not a few other men of parts, did not continue. It stopped, somewhat suddenly, in November, 1918, when the Germans signed an armistice which was synonymous with surrender. The effect of this was felt very quickly by Europe in general, and by Paul in particular. To begin with, the hope of decorating the peak of his cap with gold leaves vanished. In the second place, the attitude of his superiors changed—it was a subtle change, but he felt it to be a very real change, none the less.

He began to feel that he was not indispensable; that a staff appointment is a temporary appointment and not a permanent rank; that there were, or would be soon, regular officers better fitted for his job. It was suggested to him, indirectly, that if he wished to be demobilised, the matter could possibly be arranged even at this early date; or, on the other hand, if he wished to remain a little while longer in the army, he would be returned to regimental duty. These and like suggestions became very apparent to Paul in the spring of 1919, and he began to see that while he had nothing to gain by staying on in the army (save a few months' employment) he might gain something by being demobilised at an early date: he would at least be well ahead of the great rush back to civil employment. Moreover, there was the question of gratuity.

The gratuity given to temporary officers on demobilisation in the late war was assessed (it will be found in the Pay Warrant, para. 497) on the officer's period of service and on his rank or appointment. He received 124 days' pay for his first year of service, and 62 days' pay for each succeeding year or part of a year. But the rate of pay upon which this was calculated was taken to be that which the officer received at the time of his demobilisation. Now as a G.S.O.3. at Montreuil, Paul drew £400 a year consolidated pay. If he was returned to regimental duty he would revert to the rank of lieutenant in the R.A.S.C. at about £250 a year. If, therefore, he was demobilised from his present job, he would have a gratuity of some £400 instead of £250 on the basis of the 372 days' pay due to him. He decided to be demobilised without delay.

There was another reason which urged Paul Bellamy to leave the army.

During the last few months that he had been at G.H.Q. he had seen much of an officer in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps—one Monica Van't Hoff. He had persuaded himself that he was very much in love with her. Monica Van't Hoff was to be demobilised in a few days' time. Paul had no wish to stay longer in Montreuil.

It is a brave thing to marry (in these days) on a putative income of £500 a year. But Paul Bellamy, it is to be feared, cannot be credited with so much spirit. Monica Van't Hoff's position in the world, both social and financial, was well known. On the other hand, it would be unjust to place Paul among the adventurers; he was as incapable of marrying solely for money as solely for love. Like every man, he hoped to marry for both. He was sincerely in love with Monica; as, indeed, were all who knew her.

So, in these warm days of early spring, on the seaboard of Pas-de-Calais, Paul stood upon the threshold of opportunity, the undeclared lover of Monica Van't Hoff.

The little village of la Calotterie hides itself in an agreeable manner among woods. The road thither from Montreuil is pleasing to the traveller. The car in which Paul sat was of high power, noiseless in action, comfortably sprung and competently driven. The General, beside him, was in a good humour. The sun shone.

Paul had been unusually silent during the drive. He examined the set of his jacket a dozen times and, as the car took the hill leading up to the D.G.T. camp, he flicked off, with his handkerchief, the few specks of dust that had settled upon his boots during the drive. He straightened his cap.

"I'll be some time with Challoner," said the General, as the car drove into camp. "You're going to see Major Denton, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'd better turn up at the Château for lunch."

"Thank you, sir, but I expect Denton and Howe will ask me into their mess. I know most of the "A" wallahs, sir, and I may as well . . ."

"Right. I think that would be better. Be here, then, at three o'clock."

"Yes, sir."

Paul Bellamy jumped out of the car, held open the door for General Brugh-Scraevner, saluted, and walked up the wooden steps into the warren of officers which housed Transportation. Whatever Captain Bellamy said to Major Denton in his office and later to Captain Howe over a Martini in the mess, is as little germane to this history as it was (possibly) to Operations B. It did not delay Paul for long, for about noon he found himself in an open glade to the south of the camp in a state of nervous agitation, flicking his boots with his cane, hoping and fearing in almost equal measure that Monica would pass by there as she was wont to do at that hour.

It was not the first time that Paul had suffered from the tender passion. He had already made love to a number of women and an affair of the heart had held him in chains for nearly a twelvemonth after he had left Oxford. He had been a party in some few minor and disreputable adventures. But he had not heretofore proposed to any woman to enter with her into that state which has been devised firstly for the procreation of children and thirdly for mutual society, help and comfort. He was now more nervous than he had

feared to be or even knew he was. In his heart he was not a little afraid of Monica Van't Hoff.

The khaki uniform of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps fades easily into the browns and greens of tree-trunks, bracken and undergrowth in spring, so that Monica came upon him almost before Paul realised that she had entered the glade. She held out her hand to him.

"So you came over with the General, Captain Bellamy?"

"Er—yes . . . yes."

"I saw the car outside the office. Isn't it lovely in these woods, this morning? One can smell the spring. Everything seems to be sprouting up; you can almost see the leaves growing."

"Yes—lovely—awfully jolly," said Paul, inanely.

"Do you know, I'm almost sorry I'm going. I have grown quite in love with this spot, and it gets more lovely every day now. I thought I'd love to get rid of this beastly uniform and the discipline and all that and just be myself once more, but now, you know, I'm sorry to leave it all."

"When do you go?" stammered Paul.

"Next Thursday."

"As soon as that?"

Monica nodded. He thought she had never looked more desirable, as she stood there, a tall figure, lightly poised on the mossy ground, her brown hair low over her forehead and her blue eyes looking very frankly and happily into his. If Monica Van't Hoff was not pretty in the accepted sense (and she was not): if her features were too irregular, her nose too short and her mouth too large for the face beautiful; yet the light in her eyes and the laughter on her lips, her strength, her

youth and her particular charm which it was as difficult to describe as to resist, made her desired and beloved above women of much greater beauty or even readier wit. "Rogue in porcelain" might have stood for her had she not been too tall for china and too wise to be a rogue.

She stood there, laughing in the sunlight, out of sheer spring happiness, and Paul could have sworn that she knew why he was there and all that he wished to say to her, could he but find words, and, out of sheer contrariness, she would not help him out at all.

"Monica," Paul blurted out at last, "I love you."

"I know that," said Monica, nodding her head.

Paul stared at her with his mouth half open. It was not the answer according to the rules, either one way or the other. He could think of no suitable reply.

"I have known this for some weeks," she added.

Paul took a step towards her.

"Then you love me, Monica?"

She stepped back from Paul, and her face grew serious and her eyes troubled.

"Indeed, I don't—Paul. I like you very, very much. We have been good friends, haven't we? But I don't love you."

"Monica," cried Paul, "marry me! Can't you love me a little—just a little? I love you, how can I tell you how much I love you? I worship you! I can't live without you! I want you—you—you!"

But though the shadows in her eyes deepened, it was of pity only.

"I do not love you. I'm sorry, but there it is. I don't know why I shouldn't love you—but I don't. I can't help it. Paul, forget me: there are others. Women will easily love you. I don't quite know why

I don't myself. I shall be away in a few days. Forget all about me."

"You don't know me, Monica, or you would not talk like that."

The trouble in Monica's eyes lessened.

"I think I do," she murmured.

"You don't," broke in Paul, with violence. "I say you don't. You think this is but a passing fancy: that I can fall in and out of love like a sentimental clown."

"I never said that," cried Monica.

"But you meant that. You think me as light as air, as inconsistent as the wind! Listen! Whenever I hear the wind murmur it is of you: the seas whisper your name in summer weather and shout it in winter storms: the sunshine and the flowers but speak of you: the moon, the stars of night . . ."

"My dear Paul, this is very pretty, but do you suppose any woman was ever won like that?"

"You think I'm not speaking the truth?"

"I think you are just now remembering what you made up yesterday to say to-day."

The hit was so shrewd that Paul was wholly disconcerted.

"That is unkind of you," he muttered at last, with a hint of tears in his voice.

"I did not mean to be unkind," said Monica, gently.

"Then marry me."

"That would be to be most unkind, for I do not love you."

"Oh, you are heartless! You think me but a love-sick school-boy. Don't shake your head at me, I know it. You think that this means nothing to me: that in a week I shall be loving some other woman. You are wrong. You have broken my idol, rejected my offer-

ing. You, and not I, are responsible for the future. What may, what must, happen to me is to you but a small thing, something to be remembered and as soon forgotten . . ."

"No, Paul, no."

"Yes, Monica, yes. What will happen to me is now at your door. Next week I am to be demobilised. What do you think will be the fate of one thus thrown into the world—unloved—alone—despised? You talk of a man going to the dogs—believe me, they are very real Cerberi that guard a hell upon earth. But I shall know their names to quiet them: I have a cake to throw them. They shall fawn upon me and I shall pass on and within. You will not like to look upon your work, later, Monica. I shall not be pretty to look at:

And he fell far through that pit abysmal
The gulf and grave of Maginn and Burns,
And pawned his soul for the devil's dismal
Stock of returns.

You will not know me then, or wish to remember how . . ."

But a peal of laughter interrupted Paul. He glared at Monica, who, with her head thrown back, laughed joyously in the face of heaven.

"Paul, you will most certainly do nothing of the kind."

"You are even heartless enough to taunt me, to dare me to . . ."

"To go to the dogs? Yes, the little puppy-dogs. And when you get there . . ."

Monica Van't Hoff turned, leaving her phrase unfinished and ran down the glade.

"Ah! and when I get there!" cried Paul, tragically. Monica looked back and laughed.

"You can give them my love!"

A few seconds later Monica Van't Hoff had vanished among the trees and a despondent figure in brown and scarlet stood alone among the flowers and fern, frowning, and decapitating anemones viciously with a cane.

CHAPTER III: DANAE

HE sat at a small round table of enamelled iron in the hot sunshine. A tall, conical glass stood before him. He sucked up the cool, orange-coloured concoction through two straws. A wide-brimmed panama hat guarded his head and forehead from the heat of the sun. His gaily coloured blazer decorated pleasantly the white stone balustrade behind him. His silk shirt, open at the neck, and his white duck trousers, looked agreeably cool. He carried a pair of brown tinted glasses across the bridge of his nose: partly to protect his eyes from the glare; partly because it is customary to wear such in Monte Carlo: partly because from behind these obscure windows one may gaze earnestly upon beauty without offence. For one who but three weeks ago had stood a rejected lover, eloquent of despair and threatening moral dissolution, he seemed very much at his ease: composed, free of care, and content.

He finished his drink, used his empty glass as a gong to call the waiter and paid his reckoning. He rose, and, after pacing the terrace leisurely for a few minutes, turned into the Café de Rome for lunch.

Monte Carlo is commonly supposed to be a resort of the desperate: of broken men, making a last bid for fortune: of the fools who lose money and of the knaves who win it: of the ingenious and the ingenuous: of gilded men and scarlet women: Paphos and Aphaca—

Sodom and Gomorrah: a city given over to evil, empty of the good, the just and the upright.

The picture is an alluring one, but in spite of the floor of Ciro's, the cellars of the Café de Rome, the *salles des jeux*, and the suicides' graveyard, it scarcely lives up to its reputation. The great majority of folk who go to Monte Carlo live decently in Kensington or Kingston: Boissière or Neuilly; Fifth Avenue or Brooklyn; play cautiously, drink not deeply, dance without impropriety and love circumspectly. Paul Belamy, late Captain in the R.A.S.C., who sat at luncheon in the Café de Rome, did not differ greatly from the many of the middle class who go to Monte Carlo once or twice and talk of it at all times, and who are happy in thinking themselves somewhat sadder dogs than (to do them justice) they are.

It is a very jolly thing to be set free after four years of service in the field; to be given four hundred pounds by a grateful country: to have a competence, even though it be small, to fall back upon, and so to be under no immediate need to pass from the bondage of one's country into that of one's countrymen. It is very pleasant when (for a period of years) one has gone when they said go, and come when they said come, and done this when they said do this, to do as one wishes and to go where one wills without any thought but to please the whim of the moment. It is a great thing to have, suddenly, four hundred pounds to one's credit in the bank. If, added to all this, one's addresses have been rejected without too great an injury to the heart, so that the sense of physical freedom is enhanced by the thrill of a moral irresponsibility, one may be thought a happy man; or as near to happiness as imperfect nature will allow.

If Paul did not consciously think he was happy, he none the less felt happy as he sat at his table in the café surrounded with a number of dishes carrying a variety of *hors-d'œuvre*. He filled his plate, leisurely, with a meticulous care in selection: an egg in mayonnaise, two anchovies, some cucumber, an olive, some of the vegetable salad which is a speciality of the café, and the heart of a globe artichoke. He spent time upon the wine-list, turning from page to page, reading the names of many wines which he did not intend to buy, while the waiter stood very civilly and patiently behind him waiting for him to make his choice.

It was a habit with Paul, this, to linger over a wine list. To be sure there are worse things to read, such as novels, newspapers, hotel bills, railway time-tables, the Army List and (usually) one's passbook. If one is fortunate enough to be able to sit in the Café de Rome and read their wine list, it were clownish but to turn to the page and straightway order a hock or a claret, and unforgivable not to look at it at all, but shout for a beer or a mineral water like a millionaire from Illinois. So Paul read about Lafite and Latour, Poyferré and Haut-Brion, Chambertin, Romanée, Musigny, Yquem, and a host of others before he ordered a half bottle of Château Filhot and a Napoléon water. Of his table waiter he had already ordered *œufs gelés*, and a little later he was enjoying this excellent dish, agreeably washed down with Château Filhot, when the reaction of two of his senses caused him to use a third. His sense of hearing and his sense of smell made him look up from his plate.

If he had had no eyes to see, yet a step so light and a perfume so delicately compounded should have been

alone enough to make him love the unseen as she passed, even had he been as old as Methuselah and as cold as Knox. So that when she turned and sat at one of the small tables in a line with his own and faced him, he forgot all about frozen eggs and white wine and stared like a stuck-pig at the girl three tables away.

She was worthy of regard.

A small, oval face set in old gold. 'A face in which each feature was subordinate. A nose exquisitely modelled; a small, delicate mouth, framed for kisses. Eyes of the deepest blue, shadowed by long lashes. Skin like the petal of a rose: a small, rounded chin, dimpling into laughter; and about all, like the rich filigree setting of an unblemished jewel, a golden cloud of hair.

It was a splendour which even the wide hat could in no way hide or diminish: a million threads of the purest and palest gold, refined in the fire times without number, and drawn to the fineness of a spider's web. Whenever she moved her head, light danced from filament to filament, so that the onlooker was dazzled by it. No artifice had framed that halo: no alchemy known to man nor art to woman had fixed that lustre. Born of the old gods, in some forgotten island of the *Ægean*, cradled in the sea foam, hidden ageless for unnumbered centuries, and here and now unveiled to a world grown blind and full of fear: a world of little men who had bartered away strength and beauty for the copper coin of charity and hope.

Paul stared wide-eyed at such beauty. If she noticed his bad manners underneath her long lashes, she made no sign of having done so. She talked eagerly to the waiter who had hurried to her table, and then,

turning from him, busied herself in searching in the inside of her bead bag which lay upon the cloth before her.

She wore a tightly-fitting jumper of white silk, low cut in the neck, and a white skirt. Her short sleeves left her arms bare to above the elbow, and their slender and rounded beauty and her small hand, with its long and delicate fingers, played further havoc in the heart of Paul.

Paul Bellamy knew but little about woman's dress. Yet he knew instinctively that she was dressed with the most perfect taste, with the utmost simplicity and at the greatest cost. She wore no jewellery save one ring carrying a sapphire, and a plain gold slave bangle above the elbow of her left arm.

The unknown (and, as Paul feared, unknowable) one in the white jumper sipped at her Sauterne and ate delicately of her *petits pois*. She seemed unconscious of the presence of Paul or of anyone else in the café. As to what Paul himself ate or drank for the remainder of the meal, he had small remembrance. He ate—and drank—mechanically. When the waiter brought him his coffee and brandy, Paul did not again ask for the wine list or demand that another year be brought him, as he would at any other time have done. One complex in his mind was dominant at the moment above all others.

The girl of the golden aureole left the café before Paul had finished his coffee. As she walked down the room he gazed round-eyed at her slender figure so lightly poised upon her small feet and at her small ankles, so thin that he might have made his thumb and finger meet around them.

She was gone, and the café, that was still full of

people and gay with colour, seemed to Paul suddenly empty and drab. He drank up his brandy hurriedly and called for the bill.

Outside the café Paul scrutinised all the chairs on the terrace. She was not there. He walked through the gardens, up on the one side and down on the other, but without success; and, after searching in vain the terrace below the casino, he came back and went inside. The long hall outside the gaming rooms, though full of women, was empty of the one woman he wished to see again. He went into the *salles des jeux*. The tables were not crowded at this hour: only three were in play. He threw a five-franc counter, idly, on *vingt-deux* and raked in, automatically and without delight, the thirty-six counters accruing to him. He lost a few counters at the other tables, and, wandering twice around the room and into the bar, he left the Casino in an ill mood. He decided to go up, by the rack railway, to La Turbie. Monte Carlo stifled him. So high a place, and the wide spaces and the great view from there, might, he imagined, calm his discontent.

The ascent to La Turbie (by rail) is always a ridiculous adventure. The engine puffs and snorts at every steep place in a very human manner: the railside stations at which the train stops are like toy stations on a toy railway in a giant nursery; and La Turbie itself has a delightful air of looking down on Monte Carlo (by which it lives) as a contemptible spot. From these high hills, the bay of Monaco looks minute and infinitely remote—like a scene viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. The harbour itself seems to be but a rectangular bath, and the big buoys in the middle of it look for all the world like bath plugs, the which, if you leant down and pulled them up, would allow all

the water to run out of the sea. There is something remedial about all high places, and certainly Paul returned to Monte Carlo in a better mind than when he had left it.

He had taken a healthy walk up on the hills above La Turbie, during which he had reflected that, in so small a place as Monte Carlo, he could hardly fail to see her again—and that before very long. How he would speak to her—if he would speak to her at all: what he would say or what might come of it, he did not know. A chaos of thoughts and desires rioted in his mind: his selective intelligence played no part as yet: it was but clear to him that if he dined at the Café de Rome he might possibly—even probably—see her again. To see her again was his immediate intention.

He went back to his hotel, bathed and dressed for dinner slowly and with great care. He was at his table in the Café de Rome at an early hour: only a few diners had come in before him. He ordered his dinner and a bottle of Piper Heidsieck and sat, with what patience he could muster, to await the coming in of the unknown fair.

Although he dallied over his food, the *hors d'œuvre*, soup and fish had been eaten without any sight of her; and, indeed, it was not until nearly half-past eight o'clock, when Paul was eating a *coupe jacques*, that his patience was rewarded.

She came in alone and sat down at a small table in front of a pillar opposite Paul across the dancing floor. If she had been beautiful that morning wrapped up in a jumper, this night she was a vision of delight, a houri, sent by the compassionate out of Paradise, to gladden the hearts of true believers.

Again she wore a dress of the simplest design: but a sheath of black taffeta, deeply cut in the back, sleeveless and ending just below the knee, and hung precariously by two golden threads across her white shoulders.

Without a hat to shadow it, the golden splendour of her hair held the eye so that it could not turn away to look upon any baser metal. It shone with a live and shifting radiance under the lamplight, like the halo in an Angelico painting; and it stood out about her small head like a cloud, as big as any halo ever limned by the devout for the Mother herself or the messengers of God. Her neck and her arms and her shoulders stood out against the black of her dress, whiter than the very foam from which the goddess rose.

Paul dropped his eyes at last and, raising his glass, drank a silent toast; and then, to bolster up his courage, drank the quarter of a bottle of the wine in the same part of a minute. He called the waiter and ordered coffee and a Grand Marnier.

Presently, while he sipped at his coffee and liqueur, the girl beckoned to a waiter. The waiter hurried away after a word with her, and a few minutes later a slim, dark young man with an Italianate face, came up to her table and bowed ceremoniously. The band broke out into a fox-trot and the young man, taking her hand, was soon dancing with her among the couples on the floor.

At this time in April, at the end of the season, in a year but barely emerged from the clouds of war, Monte Carlo was not crowded and there were but few dancers. So Paul, who watched the two jealously from his table, could see every movement as she kept time with the music: every pose of her body and every intricate step, but little obscured by the other dancers.

If the young man with the oval, clean-cut face and the small hands and feet danced well—as he, of necessity, did, for he was the professional male dancer there, at the beck of any woman with gold to spend or custom to bring—yet the golden-haired girl danced better still: not only with her feet that barely touched the floor, not only with every limb, every muscle in itself a melody; but with her very soul a corybant. Paul, who was himself a dancer, born and not made, watched the pair, envious of their skill and hotly jealous of the man's privilege. He drank his Grand Marnier at one gulp. He swore to himself that he would dance with her.

The orchestra ceased to play and the girl returned to her table. Paul looked at her earnestly, but she made no sign at all of noticing his regard. At last he turned and motioned to the waiter behind him.

"I wish to speak to the head waiter," he said.

"But certainly, Monsieur."

A few minutes later the head waiter stood at Paul's elbow.

Your head waiter—your *maître d'hôtel*—is of a class apart. He may have been—though this is hard to believe—once upon a time a waiter: a common waiter. As a boy he may have been a *chasseur*: as a young man, a mere porter of dishes: in early middle age, a waiter of promise—and so on up the social ladder. But I don't believe head waiters are made like this. I believe them to be recruited from the Church: from the higher ranks in the Church. A coadjutor, I imagine, is taken on probation: a bishop—in *partibus*—is appointed to a lesser post with hopes of advancement; whilst a metropolitan out of a job would be accepted *per se*.

In England, those of the hierarchy who have missed their vocation drift naturally into becoming hall porters in clubs of repute; but in France they become head waiters.

I do not know if the head waiter in the Café de Rome is an unhatted cardinal, but he looks it. He is alike the servant of all and the master over one: he is courteous without being servile: he is tyrannous without being tactless: he is your guide in things temporal as he was once (we may suppose) in things spiritual; and he is too much of a philosopher to be your friend.

It needs great moral courage to send for such a man, but Paul's holding in this was stiffened for the moment with the help of MM. Heidsieck and Lampostolle.

"You wished to see me?" said the head waiter. There was a benediction in his speech.

"The lady who is sitting at that little table, there, by the pillar . . ."

"Mademoiselle Quesnoy?"

"You know her?"

"But certainly, Monsieur."

"Tell me, is she—er—*du monde*—or—*du demi-monde*?"

"*Monsieur*," answered the head waiter, spreading out his two hands in a gesture that accepted the follies of youth, the ways of the world and the weakness of the flesh, with a fatherly indulgence, "*Monsieur, elle cherche sa fortune.*"

"I thank you much," said Paul. "If she seeks her fortune, I will ask her to dance."

"Mademoiselle will be enchanted," murmured the head waiter. He bent slightly towards Paul, turned and faded silently away.

A few minutes later Paul Bellamy stood before the small table by the pillar. The beautiful Quesnoy looked up and smiled at Paul, in a very friendly manner, and Paul forgot altogether the pretty speech which he had composed a moment ago. He could only stammer haltingly in the French of an Englishman.

"Mademoiselle, will you do me the pleasure of dancing with me?"

"But surely, Monsieur. I have a great envy to dance."

The tone of her voice was a cadence as soft as the echoes of a tiny waterfall in the speaking hills.

"The music has begun," continued Paul, "and the floor invites us. Let us go."

The first dance was to Paul an unmeasured delight and a memory never afterwards to be forgotten. When, at last, the music ceased and he led the golden girl to his table, it seemed to him that he had been dancing for the whole of time upon the roof of heaven and with Venus in his arms, snatched up out of her orbit around the parochial sun to be his partner beyond Space and Time, and yet the dance seemed, at the same time, so brief that its ending was a cause for tears.

He gazed across the narrow table at this divinity and found himself dumb, but she talked all the while easily of trifles: of the state of the floor: of the music: of the other dancers: now in French and now in broken English, which Paul found adorable.

"You see that tall girl—there—dancing with the man with the big beard—*le poilu lâ*—the girl in blue with very leetle on her back—she is Karyska, the new dancer in the ballet at Rome: her man is an American banker: *barbare*, but he has much money. The young man with the red-haired girl is the Duc de Vichânes,

and the fat man at the table with the three women—the fat man with the—*comment dites-vous, la tête chauve?*—is Schrödenheimer, the millionaire. The girl in green . . .”

“Mademoiselle, what will you drink?” broke in Paul.

“A leetle champagne—as you say it, the bubbly, *n'est-ce pas?*”

A waiter appeared suddenly from nowhere.

“*Un Piper, encore?*”

Paul nodded.

“*Merçi, M'sieur.*” The waiter vanished into nothing with the same suddenness.

The wine waiter himself poured out the golden liquid into the fine glasses. Paul raised his, and, stretching his hand out across the table, touched the rim of his glass against hers.

“*À vos beaux yeux,*” he murmured.

The beautiful eyes to which he drank gazed deeply and fearlessly and very wisely into his across the two glasses. Paul dropped his own gaze quickly lest he should, under that starry spell, say and do that which might not, then and there, be said or done; and it was, perhaps, as well that the orchestra at that moment began a one-step and so saved Paul from a breach of good manners, the which, together with lack of cash to pay one's bill, is alone unpardoned in the Café de Rome.

Of how many times they danced together or what they said to one another, while they sat at table, sipping the golden Piper, Paul remembered little next morning. Late in the evening she had said she must go, and Paul had asked to be allowed to see her home.

His escort had been accepted.

As he walked beside her under the panoply of stars,

he could almost have believed that this was no mortal child—but a goddess out of a pagan heaven. Bare-headed in the night, wrapped around in her black furs, she seemed but as a star set above the clouds of storm, cold and unattainable, and but for the warmth of her arm against Paul's and of her hand on his, no woman, but the figment of a dream.

He had no memory of whither they had walked—whether to the north or to the south—to the east or to the west—but only that this itinerary seemed all too short. He had stood before the white face of her house, before he knew, almost, that he was there. She had drawn her arm out of his, and, taking a small key from her bag, slipped it into the little hole in the tall door. A narrow rectangle of blackness grew in the doorway. In some small fraction of a minute, while Paul stood in the roadway, about to speak, the black gap in the door had swallowed her up. And all Paul saw before him, when he had ended his request, were the high doors, white in the starlight, and the small shield of a Yale lock. He turned away at last and, walking aimlessly down hill, found himself at length upon the terrace below the Casino, overlooking the sea.

A great round moon had just risen an inch or so out of the eastern water, printing the still sea with silver bars. For a great while (as it seemed to him) Paul leant upon the stone balustrade, gazing into the face of the moon.

He sighed heavily, from time to time, so that, had anybody been near him, they might well have thought him to be one who, having lost all at the tables, pondered on the crime of self-murder.

"She moves as a moon in the wane"

murmured Paul, heedless of fact—orient or occident were one to him at the moment—

“She moves as a moon in the wane,”

he repeated, and then, throwing out his two arms to the moonrise, he mouthed out (as all of us have done at times, so it must be forgiven him):—

“We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,
Thou art noble and nude and antique;
Libitina thy mother, Priapus
Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.
We play with light loves in the portal,
And wince and relent and refrain;
Loves die, and we know thee immortal,
Our Lady of Pain.

* * * *

“Cry aloud; for the old world is broken:
Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,
And rears not the bountiful token
And spreads not the fatherly feast.”

He stood a little while longer staring at the sea in silence, and then, with a sigh, turned to make his way home to bed. But one memory alone remained to console him. He remembered that she was to dine with him on the morrow.

CHAPTER IV: YVONNE EN PLEIN

SHE was clad to-night in the tenderest green: like a golden flower opening out of its green calyx: like a yellow iris above the green sedge. She talked to Paul about herself, without restraint and without regret. Paul spoke but little: he was content to watch the light that played about her hair: to gaze into her large eyes: to study the changing expression in her face: to eye, with envy to possess, her parted lips, her white shoulders, eloquent with meaning as she shrugged them: her slender arms and her long fingers, where they lay, now asleep and now alive, upon the tablecloth; and to listen to the music of her speech: to sun himself in the caress of look and voice, like a dog in a patch of sunlight on a day in spring.

"*Ah! mais c'est triste, ce moment-ci, à Monte Carle.* The season is ended, you understand: and what a season! *Mon Dieu:* no-one but Spaniards and Jews, and I don't know who—*meteques*—and Americans—always the Americans—*barbares.* *Je les déteste, moi: punaises!* They are rich—yes—but they are mean, and they have no manners. I danced with one here a few weeks ago. We had one dance and then, *mon Dieu,* he wants to go home with me: *comme j'étais une fille.* Ah, *ils sont mal élevés, ces gens-là.* They are not like the English, *mon chéri.* The Englishman is *gentil, bien élevé:* he is always a gentleman, the Englishman."

"*Vous êtes trop aimable, Mademoiselle,*" said Paul, fatuously.

"He is so generous, the Englishman," murmured Yvonne Quesnoy, as she raised her glass and sipped at the golden Yquem.

She did not seem to expect a reply to this generality and Paul made none. He shifted in his chair a little uneasily. He busied himself with the *sole gastronome* on his plate and drank some wine. Yvonne seemed, for a moment, to have fallen into thought. Her wonderful eyes no longer sought his, but seemed to look through and beyond him, as though seeing far away things, beyond the painted walls of the Café de Rome; peradventure outside even the limits of the Principality, if still within the diameter of the round earth. Her left hand lay asleep upon the table.

Paul put out his right hand and placed his fingers upon hers.

"What a lovely stone," he said, in excuse, touching the ring on her third finger.

"*Le saphir?* Yes, it is a good stone. Isidore gave it to me."

"I am jealous of Isidore," murmured Paul.

"You have no need to be, *chéri*. *Il m'ennuie, cet Isidore*. He is, oh, so old and ugly and *exigeant: une grosse bête: un singe, vraiment. Mais qu'est-ce que vous voulez?* A girl must live somehow. He is rich. Aurillacq—pardon, Monsieur le Comte d'Aurillacq. He gave me *cinq mille francs* to play with here, while he went on business to London; and now, it is all gone. *Mon chéri*, I have lost all of it. I was to give him half, if I won: but if I lost, it did not matter. *Vous voyez*. But, *hélas!* I lost it all so quickly, and he won't be back for I don't know how long and I am—how do you say it—broke—*tout à fait* broke. I have lived, *chez ma tante*, for a week!"

"At your aunt's?"

"You understand? *Au mont-de-piété*—how do you say it—the pawn-shop? Ah, *c'est la misère, ça!* And—*peste*—*Monte Carle* is empty—*personne . . .*"

The rest of the complaint was drowned in the clash of the orchestra, which broke out suddenly into a fox-trot.

"Yvonne, let us dance," cried Paul.

"I will not dance much this evening—one dance, two dances, *si vous voulez. Ce soir, je fais les jeux.*"

"At the Casino?"

"*Mais oui. Nous allons au Casino. J'adore la danse, mais j'adore plus le hasard.*"

"I hardly play at all," muttered Paul, as they rose from the table.

"*Eh bien? Qu'est-ce que vous faites, donc, à Monte Carle?* But we will dance a little first. *Allons.*"

The distance from the doors of the Café de Rome to the Casino is short—fifty yards, perhaps—but in the minute that it takes to pace these, many thoughts passed and repassed through the mind of Paul. They were largely arithmetical in nature.

A bottle of champagne—of Heidsieck—costs, in the Café de Rome—well, it costs a great deal. A bottle of Yquem, even though it be not of the most notable year, costs very nearly as much. Altogether, with the champagne of last night and the dinner of this, Paul remembered to have spent some three hundred francs. It seemed to him to have been a very large expenditure for a small return—so far; and there seemed a prospect of an immediate further spending of these so necessary paper tokens. It is, truly, a joyous thing to have the most lovely girl in the world clinging to your arm, as you walk under the kindly stars, but it stops

you running suddenly away into the darkness. Even had Paul found the moral courage to leave Yvonne standing lovely and alone before the Temple of Chance, he was physically unable so to do. Instead, he climbed with her the broad steps of the Casino, and in through its doors, with his mind a queer amalgam of bravado and regret.

He walked, a little behind her, down the outer hall and in through the swing doors that lead to the gaming rooms.

"*Trente-quatre est le numéro ce soir,*" murmured the doorkeeper, as Paul passed within. "If Monsieur wins on it, he will remember me? *Hein?*"

Paul followed Yvonne down the room between the tables. She did not stop or look at any of them.

"We will play in the Salle Privée," she said, as they neared the doors at the end of the room, "*ce n'est que la canaille qu'on trouve ici.*"

"But I have not a ticket for the private rooms," objected Paul. His expression lightened: it seemed a comfortable way out of the difficulty. Yvonne swung round and faced him: she stamped the floor angrily with the high heel of her golden slipper.

"*Quelle bêtise! Alors, il faut jouer ici!*"

Poised on one small foot, with her frail hands clenched and her eyes afire, she seemed to Paul more to be desired than ever.

"We'll play at that table over there; there is less of a crowd there, and I know the croupier."

After a little pushing, and words from a bald-headed man with a black beard, whom Yvonne pushed past, Paul found himself sitting at the table. Yvonne sat next to him on his left and beside the croupier.

The players around the table were not remarkable:

they were of the types commonly to be seen at Monte Carlo at the end of the season.

There were the usual number of elderly ladies, chiefly dressed in black of an expensive dowdiness, acid in manner and cautious in play. There were a couple of young men of a trade to which the uncle of Cressid has lent a name. There were old men with systems and young girls without. There were two Japanese gentlemen, who played far more heavily than any other players at the table, but whose immobile features might have been cut in bronze. There was the usual American seeing Europe, and the usual Englishman, seeing nothing. In brief, around this table, as around the other tables in the room, sat the great middle-class, with here and there a prince or pimp, countess or courtesan, to be exceptions to a proved rule. If one should search all Europe for the birth-place of adventure, one could hardly find a more unlikely spot than this, the common gaming room of Monte Carlo, at the end of the month of April.

Yvonne Quesnoy took a number of counters, mostly five-franc ones, with a few of twenty francs, and placed them from time to time on black or red, odd or even, *passe* or *manque*, on the squares and dozens and rarely on a number, *en plein*. Paul had changed a hundred-franc note and played a cautious game on low hazards. At the end of a quarter of an hour, Paul found himself some twenty francs to the good, whilst Yvonne had no counters left.

She held up her silk bag, wide-open for Paul to see its emptiness: its emptiness save for the silk pouch holding the powder puff and the little mirror.

"Chéri, I have not a counter left," said Yvonne, turn-

ing her large eyes appealingly on Paul, "*pas un sou*; give me a hundred francs to play with?"

It is to be feared that Paul gave her the hundred-franc note with but an ill grace. So plainly, indeed, did he show his bad temper, that, although he said no word out loud, yet Yvonne, watching him narrowly through her long lashes, knew that it would be useless to ask him for more.

She took the note and thanked him prettily nevertheless, leaning her golden head towards him until her silken hair brushed against his, so that its fragrance almost for the moment stole away his prudence.

She did not at once pass the note to the croupier for change into counters. She watched the wheel in an absent manner as it spun, while her fingers, idly, as though without direction, folded and refolded the note. Suddenly, just as the croupier was about to chant the monotonous "*Rien ne va plus*," she placed the now many-folded note on seventeen.

An audible sigh went up from those near her. A hundred franc stake is not a great one for Monte Carlo, but, *en plein*, on a one in thirty-seven chance, it is big enough. Paul was too angry—too materially interested in the matter—to sigh: he stared at the wheel with a fixed gaze as it revolved slowly and yet more slowly. The ball fell into 21 and then out again: it hovered over 9 and 34, coquetted with 3, seemed to make up its mind to stay in 11, and, then, at the last moment, jumped out again, and, finally, with a last despairing wobble, fell into 17.

"*Dix-sept gagne*," said the croupier, impassionately.

The players about the tables of Monte Carlo form the most undemonstrative audience in the world.

Yvonne took her three thousand five hundred francs from the croupier in a silence, and under the cumulative stare of fifty pairs of eyes. She arranged her winnings on the table in front of her without haste, methodically. Paul alone had shown any emotion as the ball fell into the number, but she cut his exclamation short with a "*Tais-toi, donc!*"

"*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs,*" cried the croupier, "*faites vos jeux,*" as he spun the wheel in one direction and the ball round the groove in the other.

Very deliberately, Yvonne placed her stakes upon the table: 180 francs again on 17, 360 francs "*à cheval,*" on 16 and 17, 1,200 francs on *transversale simple*, covering 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 1,860 francs, the remainder of her winnings, on the middle dozen.

The silence of the table was more eloquent than any speech. There were yet many seconds before the ball would cease to roll or the croupier would stop further stakes with his "*rien ne va plus.*" Hurriedly, other players at the table began to follow Yvonne's play, a few placing small stakes on 17 *en plein*, others more cautiously, backing "*rouge, impair, manque,*" or a group of numbers containing the number 17.

The behaviour of the ball on a roulette board is infinitely various. I do not know how or by whom these small round balls are made. They may be—no doubt they are—turned out by the thousand from automatic machines, controlled by some mechanic, by some low workman, as the Great Lexicographer has it. They may be sold by the gross over common counters by automatons in starched collars to retailers with starched souls.

But before the spherical travellers are placed in the

circus to make or to mar the fortunes of men and women with the high courage of adventure, some Imp of Opportunity is imprisoned within each small ball by the Gods of Chance to plague the player watching the itinerary of the Imp.

Sometimes he will jump in and out of every number on the board with a fine impartiality, until at last, wearied with so many futile attempts to find a resting place to his liking, he will drop into a particular number out of sheer fatigue. Sometimes he will seem to be in love with a group of two or three numbers together, wobbling backwards and forwards among them, until, at the last moment, he will spin away, as though having suddenly made up his mind to have none of them, and drop, at hazard, into some number a diameter away. Sometimes he will fall two, three, four times into the same number and, at last, hop out into its right or left hand neighbour in perversity, to annoy those players who thought him happily settled in the number upon which they had punted. Sometimes, as he did in this case, he will run around and around the circle, slowly and yet more slowly, but always in the groove above, as though he had no liking for any number on the board, but proposed to stay for ever, against the laws of gravitation, on the higher slopes, and so do in all those who were rash enough to adventure their money on the table, yet at the last moment to drop suddenly and finally into the one number which he had had in his mind all along.

In this last manner the ball rolled while Yvonne had her all upon and around *dix-sept*. Slowly and more slowly the ball moved, until one wondered how there was yet enough centrifugal force to keep it in the groove above. And then, very deliberately, it sank solidly into

seventeen. A table at Monte Carlo never cheers, but, as the croupier told all at the table that seventeen had won (which was needless, so intense had been the interest of everyone), it came nearer to cheering aloud than that restrained assembly has ever been. The two croupiers lifted the wire gratings of their tills and between them counted out to Yvonne the very presentable sum of 22,140 francs. To Paul himself, sitting at her elbow, it seemed a dream: a dream of a kind from which the happy dreamer but too soon awakes.

Yvonne made no sign of delight in her fortune. Her beautiful face was as immobile as when, a quarter of an hour earlier, she had lost her last few francs and had borrowed a hundred from Paul. She motioned the croupier for the box into which it is the custom for winners at high odds to drop a gift. As she folded a thousand franc note and stuffed it into the narrow slit of the box, the faces of the croupiers glowed with satisfaction. After all, they were but salaried officials, and it mattered nothing to them if a great run of luck should even end in closing a table or in breaking a bank.

There is, as the Scriptures tell us, a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to eat and to drink and a time to refrain from these indulgences. So, likewise, is there a time to punt and a time not to punt. Wranglers and their kind will tell you that the chance against the ball falling into the same number a third time is the same as for the second; and for the second time as for the first. This, though proven under the Law of Averages, is bunkum, and Yvonne did not yet again place a limit stake, nor indeed any stake, upon *dix-sept*.

She put fifty francs on 36 and, together with those

who blindly followed her play, lost. But she doubled the thousand francs she put on even and trebled the the five hundred francs she put on the last dozen, the ball having fallen, after coquetting with half a dozen numbers, into 32. From then onwards, she played with skill and caution; and, by a quarter of an hour before eleven o'clock, when the table closed down for lack of funds, after paying her out for a limit stake on 23, she rose from the board richer by some fifty thousand francs than when she had sat down.

"I do not play any more to-night, *mon chéri*," said Yvonne to Paul, as they turned and walked down the room, a marked pair. "To-morrow, we will play in the *salles privées*. You must get a ticket; here is money for you to play with: *le voilà*"; and Paul found himself clutching a bunch of thousand franc notes as they walked through the doors of the gaming rooms into the hall.

"Thirty-four was the lucky number? Monsieur will remember me if I was right?" murmured the door-keeper, mechanically, as they passed him.

Paul stopped.

"It was not," he said, with a gesture, "but I owe you something for not having taken your advice," and he thrust a thousand franc note into the hands of the astonished official.

"*M-m-merci, merci, Monsieur le Prince*," stammered the man, and Yvonne shook her head at him, not unkindly, in reproof.

"*Ah, petit imbécile!*"

But those whose job it is to balance the accounts of men in the books of God, made the one entry to Paul's credit for that day in his life.

"I am very tired: I am going to bed," Yvonne had

said to Paul on the steps of the Casino, and Paul walked alone and soberly to his hotel, still half-fearful that this was all a dream, with six thousand francs stuffed carelessly into his coat pocket.

CHAPTER V: ANABASIS

THE long, grey limousine glided through the narrow streets of Monte Carlo and out and up on to the hill road. Its broad, black varnished mud-guards shone in the sunshine, and, from the great nickel head lamps and its plated fittings, a dozen images of the sun himself winked at the traveller on foot, leaving him standing still dazzled a second later and angry in a cloud of dust. Others in Monte Carlo were at odds with the lady in the limousine, beside the walkers in the road, the dogs who had escaped death and the peasant struggling with a crazy horse in the shafts of a ditched cart and cursing the rich already out of sight above the hairpin bend.

For instance, there was, at this very moment, while the car took the bend in the mountain road, a disgruntled gentleman, upon one of the seats on the terrace, chewing the end of a cheroot that had gone out. He looked plainly out of humour from the cloth tops of his boots to the crown of his straw hat. Perhaps he had reason to be put out, for he had lost no little custom and was in the position of a literary agent (say) whose best-seller has turned publisher overnight. He cursed the god of chance in fluent and unprintable argot.

The once-upon-a-time hierarch also cursed the Ingenious Deity. He sat alone in his small room behind the kitchens of the Café de Rome and even the emptied bottle before him had failed to put him into a better

temper. He also deplored the loss of a percentage charge. True, there were still at his tables gentlemen with money and ladies without, out of whose juxtaposition a discreet and benign intermediary might yet draw profit. But the loss of Yvonne meant a material loss of income and his own remembered phrase added now an insult to injury in that she had found the fortune which he was wont so happily to say she sought.

Then there was the Semite in the Boulevard du Nord, who sat in the doorway of his shop and wept behind a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles. He recounted to himself again and again the number of articles of value which had been deposited in his hands for money a tenth their worth, only to be redeemed within the week. There was the amber necklace, with one great bead in it as large as the egg of a pigeon, on which he had advanced 200 francs, the which he could have sold for a thousand any day. There were gold bangles, a diamond ring, a silver-mounted dressing-case, a platinum wrist watch, silks and perfumes and pots and bottles mounted in gold—all of them, name of Satan! to be redeemed in a morning by a she-Gentile without morals and without manners: with nothing but a couple of thousand francs and a bunch of pawn tickets.

Cohenstein took off his spectacles and wiped the lenses with a large, discoloured handkerchief.

"Ten thousand francs I could have made on all that," he groaned, "and to lose such profit in a half-hour."

He rose slowly and painfully out of the broken chair in search of a glass and bottle which lived upon a shelf in a dark corner.

His wife loomed up largely out of the shadows.

"It was a shame, Isaac, that a daughter of Satan should . . ."

"Hold your tongue, curse you!" growled Cohenstein, "women's gabble . . . nothing but gabble, gabble!"

He drew the cork from the bottle and a gentle cluck-cluck-cluck sounded soothingly in his ears. Isaac Cohenstein needed something more than spiritual consolation that morning.

There was a fat gentleman with a bald head, a tiny moustache the breadth of his nose, and a multiplicity of chins, who wore an overlong frock coat and a perpetual shrug of the shoulders. He now stood in the bare bedroom of the flat which Yvonne had vacated and shrugged his shoulders until one would have thought his shoulder blades must have cracked. That his tenant had that morning paid her rent which had been overdue for many weeks would seem to be an odd cause for such misery in a landlord. Yet he stood between the tumbled bed and the dismantled dressing-table and very nearly wept.

"Name of God, that she should win!" he muttered dejectedly, spreading out two fat hands at the open door of the empty wardrobe: empty except for the litter of tissue paper in one corner. "Name of God, that a woman like that should win!"

He would not be able to let the flat now—not until the coming winter. The season was over. But for the cursed chance of the tables and the folly of a damned Englishman, the woman would have had the flat for another two months. And paid for it, too. She would have found the money somehow—there was no trouble about that. He was not a hard man: he would have given her time to find it. He was always ready to let

a tenant stay on a few weeks longer in such a case. It was a charitable policy, and a profitable one; and no risk in it. In the empty alcove of the window there had stood a large trunk, full of beautiful and expensive clothes: furs had hung in the wardrobe. The hall porter downstairs was entirely to be trusted. No tenant—no tenant whom he was deputed to watch—ever passed him with a large trunk, or even a small one.

"The cursed Englishman!" groaned the landlord, as he remembered how Yvonne had flung the notes on the table, carelessly—as one might pay a waiter, while the Englishman had turned a contemptuous back upon him and watched Annette pack silks in tissue paper.

"Dog of an Englishman!" he muttered—"and I lose two—three thousand francs!" He turned, kicked an empty cardboard box across the floor, and shrugged himself out of the room.

There was also Monsieur Adolphe Rollin, the hair-dresser in the Rue St. Jacques. To do Monsieur Rollin justice, he was not at odds with Yvonne over loss of custom, but he regretted her departure. As he sat at his white-painted desk, in his pleasant, sunlit shop, surrounded with rare and beautiful things: frail bottles of fantastic shape filled with essences and perfumes: pots and boxes of ivory and mother-of-pearl and sandalwood and tortoise-shell; and delicate instruments of nickel and silver plate, he sighed aloud and stroked his silky black beard as was his habit when his thoughts were elsewhere.

To be sure it was not the loss of a single client that filled the heart of Adolphe Rollin with regret, but for many weeks he had tended with delighted care the hair of Yvonne.

He was an artist, was Adolphe Rollin. It was not often that one had such a head of hair under one's hand. As he combed out that silken flood, letting it fall over his open hand like a cascade of sunlight, he used to vow that there was no woman in Monte Carlo—nay, nor in Paris itself—to equal this.

He sighed as he sat at his desk, and spoke sharply to his cashier, who interrupted his thoughts with trivial words about nothing. A woman who was honest and understood accounts, but with hair like brass wire and an offence to the eye.

"That is not hair—bah!" muttered Adolphe, to himself. "Now, Mademoiselle Yvonne, such softness—such a fragrance—such colour . . ."

He stroked his beard and ceased to hear what his cashier was saying. Adolphe Rollin had the soul of an artist—and the heart of a man.

Lastly, there were the many to whom, by the grace of the God of Chance, Yvonne owed her fortune. There were those who had placed their money on any number but seventeen, on any number but thirty-three, when thirty-three and seventeen won for her at thirty-five to one. There were all the folk—and they were legion—who backed her number when she punted and lost: all those who lost on odd when she won on even: all those who followed her lead when she lost on red.

But though she had caused to close down more than one table, no croupier had any grudge against her; how should they, who are but salaried officials, fattening on the bounty of those who win.

Or the Prince? Or they of the Company of the Establishment of Baths? Who are they to be disgruntled with the happy winner of half a million francs? At three thousand or so hours of play a year,

this—the very breaking of a bank indeed—is but a bagatelle. Day in, day out, month in, month out, over the dividend year, thirty-five is thirty-five and thirty-six is thirty-six. Whether your money be on *rouge* or *noir* it is always *Blanc* that wins in the end. Not, to be sure, by chance, but by arithmetic.

* * * * *

But if many people were out of love with Yvonne, one at least was not. As Paul Bellamy sat beside her on the terrace, she was to him the most wonderful, the loveliest, the tenderest and the best-beloved girl in all the world. He felt as if he were the prince in a fairy tale. A great, white moon hung in the sky before them and threw a ladder of silver over the still sea. The hotel was an enchanted castle, the red-roofed, Italian town, asleep in the shadows below them, a princess's fief, and the Princess herself sat beside him, with her slender fingers happy prisoners within his hand.

Presently the Princess spoke, very sweetly and tenderly, not as she had spoken with him an age (as it seemed) ago at Monte Carlo, in the ugly French-English of that time and place, but in the pure idiom of the most beautiful language to speak in the world.

"Dear Paul," she began, speaking slowly and articulately, without any of the clipping of words and slurring of syllables dear to the Parisian, so that Paul followed her readily enough, "I have buried my past. I have buried my past deep in the ground with a spade of gold. Thanks, dearest, to you."

With a sudden gesture she turned her hand in his, closing her long fingers around it and lifted his hand to her lips.

"Thanks, dear heart, to you, I have buried my world—a half world. With four hundred thousand francs

in my bank, I am no longer . . . I am no longer what I was. And I am grateful, dear Paul, am I not grateful: shall I not be grateful to my deliverer—and my lover? Or, rather, I should say, my husband: for you shall be my husband—for so long as you wish it; in the world into which we shall climb, you will be my loving husband. We shall be, thou and I, as man and wife, but with this difference, Sir, only. That when you weary of me (no, no, be silent and listen to me) you shall go away just how and when you will and that while you are with me, you are my guest. We shall reverse the common method, and Madame, not Monsieur, shall pay for both.”

“Yvonne, how can I . . .”

“Be silent: have I not said that I am grateful: who owe so much to you. Yesterday we were of the half world: to-day we are of the world. Believe me, there is no difference between the half and the whole, but an addition of francs: there is no barrier that cannot be climbed with a gilded ladder: there is no door that cannot be opened with a golden key.”

“The rank is but the guinea’s stamp,” muttered Paul.

“There is nothing that may not be achieved,” continued Yvonne, “with wit and wealth—and I have lived by my wits for more years than I care to remember or will tell even to you. To-morrow we will make our entry into the world. Believe me, the half world knows the world better than the world knows itself: it is its *métier* to do that: it is the knowledge by which it lives. To-morrow we set out to conquer the world.”

“Yvonne, dear one! But how and where?”

“We will go to the Ile de l’Escape.”

“Never heard of the place.”

"Of course you haven't. You belong neither to the world nor to the half-world."

"Yvonne!"

"Dear Paul, I did not wish to hurt you. But very few know of the Ile de l'Escope and the Château Falaise. Very few even, as you say, 'in society' go there, and the half-world never."

"*Nous irons là!*" cried Paul, "*toi et moi!*"

Yvonne rose from her chair and stood before Paul in the moonlight. She held out the soft silvery fabric of her skirt in either hand and sank slowly before him in a curtsey.

"Allow me to present to you," she murmured, "Madeleine, La Comtesse de Niverseine."

Paul Bellamy stood up and bowed low before her.

"And allow me to present to you her English husband, Paul Fennimore, Gentleman, of Combe St. Hilary in the County of Somerset."

The two figures stayed for a moment still in the moonlight, as they might have been actors in a charade. There was no sound in the sleeping night, no movement under the moon, until somewhere in the shadow of mean streets below them, a dog barked.

ACT II: THE WHOLE LOAF

"Oh l'or! son or qu'il sème au loin, qu'il
multiplie,
Là-bas, dans les villes de la folie,
Là-bas, dans les hameaux calmes et doux,
Dans l'air et la lumière et la splendeur,
partout!
Son or ailé que s'enivre d'espace,
Son or plânant, son or rapace,
Son or vivant,
Son or dont s'éclairent et rayonnent les
vents,
Son or que boit la terre,
Par les pores de sa misère,
Son or ardent, son or furtif, son or
retors,
Morceau d'espoir et de soleil—son or!"
Émile Verhaeren.

CHAPTER VI: AN ISLAND OF THE BLEST

THE Ile de l'Escope is not only a piece of land entirely surrounded by water: it is a piece of land almost wholly covered with flowers, and it lies asleep upon the blue water under a bluer sky, dreaming upon its own beauty, happily cut off from the mainland by six miles of sea. These miles of water, deep blue by day or changed to crimson by the sunset or to silver by the wakening moon, might yet be a hundred for any noise of the affairs of men that disturbs this happy island. Though so small a distance away from the coast of France, the fortunes and misfortunes of Europe matter but little to the Ile de l'Escope. War and the pain of war, peace and the miseries of peace, have small effect on the few hundred islanders who live simply by the fish they catch and the grapes they grow and by services rendered to the visitors at the Château Falaise. But if the natives of this island of flowers, set like a jewel in a southern sea and by such good luck separated from the woes of the larger land by water, live in great happiness and content, it may yet be supposed that travellers to the island must bring with them, willy-nilly, some contagion from the madding crowd.

For the Château Falaise is an hotel or hostelry within the meaning of ordinances concerned, and any whose papers are in order and whose purse can command the tariff, have the right to enjoy (if the hotel be not full) the hospitality of the Château Falaise.

It is to be imagined that the guests bring with them some infection from the outside into this retreat, some echo of noisy armaments, some whisper of untoward issues, some disclaimer of happiness, some memory of a cause for tears. *Patriae quis exsul se quoque fugit?* asks Horace: What exile from his own land ever escaped himself as well? What soldier uncertain of his command or minister of his appointment or deputy of his seat, what financier, watching the price of money or merchant anxious for his market, what husband, jealous of his wife, or lover, unhappy in his suit, can free himself of these fetters even in holiday at an hotel? But if it be at all possible, by means of place alone, to escape for a time these burdens, no more likely cause could be found than the peace and beauty of the Ile de l'Escope and the quiet comfort of the Château Falaise.

But there is yet another and adventitious cause contributory to the happiness and well-being of these visitors. When Monsieur Fabien Pavois, some twelve years ago, bought, redecorated and largely rebuilt the old Château Falaise and turned it into an hotel, he was big with an idea. It was a great idea—it was an idea of ideas, of which his bank book is witness to-day. His idea, like all great ideas, was a very simple one. People at hotels (and elsewhere, for that matter), argued Fabien Pavois, pay for many things besides the necessities of food and lodging: even outside the delight of Lucullian dishes or an Imperial bedchamber. Some (and especially the English) will pay for games—for the golf-course or the tennis court: others (and particularly the Americans) for odd conveniences, such as manicurists and tape-machines, cocktails and clam-chowder; some, again, for the Casino or the *plage*: for

dancing; for women; for gaiety; for noise. But there is one thing for which folk will pay the highest price: a thing, moreover, for which the hotel proprietor has not to pay; and that is good company. By good company is meant good company in purely a social sense. It was to meet this demand that Fabien Pavois opened his hotel in the Ile de l'Escope.

One cannot, of course, in a public hostelry turn away guests merely because they have relations in Putney or deal in pig bristles or are not noticed in Debrett, but Fabien Pavois easily overcame this difficulty by the place he chose for his hotel. On the Ile de l'Escope there is no casino and no beach; neither golf nor tennis; there is no theatre and no band; no ballroom and no bar; no women and no noise. Climbers out of Putney and dealers in pig-bristles and the like, preferred to go to Nice or Monte Carlo, Biarritz or even Cannes, where such and similar extra-mural entertainment could be enjoyed. They did not in any way trouble M. Fabien Pavois at the Château Falaise.

Fabien Pavois spared no money in converting the old château into a modern, comfortable, and indeed, luxurious hotel. His purpose was to eliminate all social discomfort for the guests he sought: it was also clearly necessary to avoid all material discomfort. So the old château was rebuilt: no bedroom lacked a bathroom opening from it: the public rooms were exquisitely decorated and lighted by electric lamps, hidden in alabaster dishes: the billiard table was by an English firm of world-wide reputation, and there was even a library equipped with books in a manner unlike any hotel. A wide terrace stretched before the château, and the gardens, beautifully planted with roses and flowering shrubs, fell away in terraces to the lower

cliff. The chef was from Paris: certain *entrées* in that city still bore his name; and he was paid by Pavois the salary of an under-secretary of State: the hotel service was said to be unsurpassed by that of any of the older London clubs, and the head gardener had been in the employ of Lady Flayne. The hotel charges were as high, if not higher, as those of any of the great caravanserais of the Riviera, but the clientèle peculiar to the Château Falaise could afford to pay (and did pay) for the comfort and the quiet and, above all, for the social immunity that it enjoyed.

It was thus that the Château Falaise was always full—and always full of those whose place in society was assured. Guests booked their rooms from year to year. The Duchess of Pennyghael had been in the habit of spending May and June at the Château until her age and infirmity kept her from travelling so far afield. Lord Fenfield, the Comtesse de la Brie and the Cardinal Voivetella were constant visitors, and Baron Hohendorf rarely missed a year, until the outbreak of the late war prohibited his excursions.

It need hardly be stated that, with such a connection, Pavois had no need to advertise. To do so, indeed, would have spoilt his custom, and the Château Falaise is not to be found in the advertisement pages of any time-table or guide-book: at Cook's and other tourist agencies it is unknown, and Pavois pays yearly for the omission of any mention of the Ile de l'Escope from the handbooks of Mr. Karl Baedeker. But even Fabien Pavois was unable to prevent a European war or to escape some of its effects, and although Lady Cantire and old Mr. Ockrington, Dr. Hanson and Canon Fairmead and the Hon. Kenneth Kingston-Pugh were of the old order, he knew nothing of John

Paterson save his name: he had doubts of Major Boomer, and the presence in his hotel of Theophilus J. Potter, of the American Y.M.C.A., was a matter of continual annoyance and regret. Moreover, in this spring of 1919 the world was as yet under the shadow of war, and there were still rooms to let even by the middle of May in the Château Falaise.

It was thus that Pavois read, with some satisfaction, a letter from a Mr. Paul Fennimore asking for rooms for himself and his wife.

The letter was written from the best and most reputable hotel in Cannes, and although he had his doubts, Pavois was in no mood to be too critical with rooms still empty and a putative Major and an American from Milwaukee drinking cocktails together shamelessly on the terrace.

"No. 17," said Fabien Pavois to his second-in-command, "is reserved for Mr. Fennimore and Madame. They arrive on Wednesday."

"They are to be met, I suppose, at St. Simon: Auguste had better go with the boat. At what time?"

"There is no need for the hotel boat," replied Pavois, with a slight cough of approval. "I understand that Mr. Fennimore will arrive in his own launch. Tell Auguste to look out for them and to be at the quay when they arrive."

Lady Cantire was used to say that she did not look as old as she was, and that she did not feel as old as she looked. This was true in so far as she was seventy years of age; looked sixty and felt fifty. She was a tall woman, vigorous for her age, with white hair parted in the middle and a face like a horse. Her antecedents were unimpeachable. Before her marriage

she had been the Hon. Virginia Peel-Hepburn, daughter of Lord Granteale; of one of the oldest of Northumbrian families. Her marriage to the Earl of Cantire had been a suitable match in every way, and his death in a private asylum fifteen years ago had freed her from a tie that had been irksome for some years. However, she did not marry again, but remained an exemplar in widowhood, wearing the black silks and satins, but here and there relieved with the white of old lace, after the fashion of an earlier age. In her youth she had been in attendance on Queen Victoria, and was said to have enjoyed her confidence. She still spoke of the Prince Consort as the Prince—a matter which caused at times considerable misunderstanding—and she considered her opinion on manners and deportment to be final.

Lady Cantire had been a constant visitor to the Ile de l'Escape before the war. The war had naturally interrupted these visits, but the spring of 1919 found her once more at the Château Falaise, to the mingled satisfaction and regret of Monsieur Pavois. For although her presence was an honourable distinction to any hotel proprietor, it was always a responsibility. Her views on other guests were severe and she was not always discreet in the expression of them. She had sent for Pavois soon after her arrival this time, and he had stood before her on the terrace very humbly to hear her complaint. She had gone straight to the point.

"Who is Boomer?" she began, in a voice which the Major, who was smoking a cigar on the lower terrace, might very well have heard.

"Major Boomer, milady?" murmured Pavois.

"Yes, who is he?"

"Royal Engineers, I believe, milady—er—on leave . . ."

"God bless the man, I know that: can't help knowing it when he struts about the place in uniform like a Prussian Adjutant in a garrison town. Why doesn't he wear mufti, if he must come here? Don't know where you find these people, Pavois."

"Yes, milady," murmured Pavois, humbly.

"And the Yankee lamp-post?"

"Pardon, milady?"

"Potter, his name, isn't it?"

"Mr. Theophilus Potter, of Milwaukee?"

"Heaven help us!—worse than Chicago! What's he doing here? Why isn't he serving out coffee or chewing gum or whatever he does to the troops? Why do you have such people here?"

"Well, milady," murmured the unfortunate Pavois, spreading out his hands, "what is it that one can do? I am ver' sorry, milady: eet is much regret: it is to me *pénible*; but, milady, things have changed. My hotel, even now, is not yet full. It cannot be helped: it is the war."

"Oh, I know; *c'est la guerre*. I've heard that excuse till I'm sick of it. You can go, Pavois; but if you have any more of these oddities staying here, I leave."

"There is Mr. Ockrington, milady . . ." began Pavois, apologetically.

"That old fool!"

" . . . and to-morrow the Canon Fairmead arrives, and on Tuesday the Hon. Kingston-Pugh . . ."

"So Kenneth is coming—and the Canon? Well, I suppose I've got to be thankful for small mercies."

"And then Wednesday, Mr. Paul Fennimore . . ."

"Never heard the name."

". . . and Madame . . ."

"Who?"

"That is Madame Fennimore, milady: she was la Comtesse de . . . I have forgot the name for the moment."

"Um—an Englishman with a French countess as wife. Well, let's hope they're respectable."

M. Fabien Pavois spread out his hands more widely than ever.

"Milady, *je vous assure* . . . I know Madame . . . would I . . ."

"Well, I suppose it's all right."

"I make my humblest apologies; but the war . . . if milady will excuse me . . . I have some affairs . . ."

"God bless the man—yes, go. I don't want you any more."

It is to be regretted that M. Fabien Pavois, in the privacy of his own room and in speaking to his adjutant, referred to Lady Cantire in terms hardly proper to the aristocracy or polite even to her sex: for it is scarcely good manners to refer (even in the French tongue) to the relict of an Earl as a sacred female of the canine tribe. Yet he at least paid Lady Cantire the compliment of echoing almost her very phrase in respect to the newcomers, saying that he hoped—that he sincerely hoped—they were respectable.

CHAPTER VII: THE AGREEABLE DRAGON

IT is not a state of mind that she would have admitted even to herself: it was a word not to be found in her vocabulary; yet it must be confessed that Lady Cantire was bored.

She sat in a complicated wicker chair on the terrace. An awning of striped canvas guarded her from the sun: the softest of cushions were at her back: a footstool supported her feet: a table at her side bore her work-basket, her handbag, her smelling-salts and her novel. Fitton, her maid, sat a few feet away, ready for any service that might be asked of her, or to talk if her ladyship was so inclined. She bent low over her needle, decently garbed in black, with white, starched collar and cuffs.

Overhead the sun shone out of a blue sky. The warm air was fragrant with the scent of roses: drowsy with the murmur of many bees. Below lay the sea, of the very azure hue from which the coast is named, splashed here and there with white and brown where the sails of fishing boats stood out against the dark water. The red roofs and the white walls of the Port St. Simon gleamed in the sunlight half-a-dozen miles away. The wide terrace lay in deep silence save for this murmur of the bees: the slight rustle, now and again, of a lizard on the lichened stone; and the faint echo of the lip-lap of the water against the rocks below.

Yet Lady Cantire was in an ill-humour. The cushions in her chair had been arranged and rearranged half-a-dozen times by Fitton without any success; and

twice she had been sent into the house in search of things which Lady Cantire found afterwards in her bag or her work-basket. The smelling salts had been judged as lacking in strength and the wool as poor in quality; and Lady Cantire had thrown down her novel with a complaint against the author for having written it, and against Mudie's for having sent it to her. She now lay back in her chair, with her knitting lying idle in her lap, and stared gloomily out to sea.

Lady Cantire was bored—even in the Ile de l'Escope and at the Château Falaise. The world, in which once she had played a part, had gone on and left her behind. The miserable war had altered many things. In the old days at the Château, things had been otherwise. There had been the Baron—a relict also of her order—whose memories of the Prince Consort and the late Emperor were always piquant: there had been the Duchess, whose gallery of the portraits of family skeletons was unique: there was the dear Cardinal, who could be wittily indelicate without being indelicately witty, and who could kiss her hand with an air unknown among the men of to-day. Now she had to console herself with Ockrington and his ear trumpet and dissertations on the state of his stomach: with the pulpit platitudes of Canon Fairmead; and Dr. Hanson on butterflies. Kenneth, it is true, was at times amusing, but he spared little time for Lady Cantire, and moreover, spoke habitually an *argot* which was as difficult to understand as it was painful to hear spoken.

So Lady Cantire leaned back among her cushions and stared at the sea and yawned: she was too weary of things even to continue her knitting or to abuse Fitton. She sat for some little time gazing towards the low coast line of the mainland, her mind taken

up with memories, seeing nothing of material things, until a gleam of sunlight upon polished metal caught her eye. It was a motor launch, half way across the intervening stretch of water, making for the little harbour below; already the faint put-put of its engine could be heard on the terrace.

Lady Cantire watched the approach of the launch with more animation than she had yet shown that morning. "It must be the man Fennimore, and the French woman: Pavois said they were coming to-day . . . I expect they'll be impossible," and she shrugged her shoulders despairingly. Yet she continued to watch the boat with interest. The arrival even of any guests was a relief from present monotony.

The launch grew larger every moment as it slipped over the still water. Looking down upon it, as it came under the island, Lady Cantire saw, beside the crew, two people sitting in the stern. The one, a young man in white ducks and a panama; the other, a woman, slender in figure, clad in a white silk jumper and a white skirt, whose face was hidden under a broad-brimmed hat. The bows of the boat were encumbered with a number of trunks and packages, a French maid with an impudent face and an Alsatian wolfhound in a spiked collar, who lay stretched out on the deck with his nose between his paws, seemingly bored with the whole affair. In another minute the launch had passed out of her view under the cliffs above the harbour.

"They *look* quite respectable," muttered Lady Cantire.

"Yes, milady," said Fitton.

"I didn't speak to you," snapped Lady Cantire.

Some three quarters of an hour later, Lady Cantire

sat listening in a somewhat absent way to Kingston-Pugh. He stood over her, in a white silk shirt, innocent of tie and open at the neck, and a pair of grey flannel trousers, very green about the knees, where he had been scrambling over the seaweed-grown rocks. He stood six feet three and a half in the flat, rubber-soled shoes that he wore. He had no hat, and his black glossy hair, close cut around his round head, and still wet from the sea, shone in the sunlight. A damp towel hung over his left shoulder. He was said to be the best-looking man in the Cornish Guards, a regiment in which good looks are proverbial, and yet of a type that has, commonly, small claim to beauty; for his head was small and round, rather than long: his nose, short: his profile, irregular. But his deep blue eyes, the poise of his head upon the neck, and the whole grace and perfect balance of his body were not easily forgotten, and his voice was very musical and persuasive.

"Had a topping dip," he was saying, "water's perfect this morning: found the best place for a dive in the island. Asked Boomer to come with me . . . but says he don't swim (I suppose he's too fat to do anything but float), so I had . . ."

He broke off suddenly, staring over Lady Cantire's head.

"My aunt!" he muttered.

"What did you say? What is that?" said Lady Cantire, fumbling for her lorgnette. She found it at last, and turning in her chair, gazed through it towards the house behind her.

On the steps leading down from the house to the terrace, stood two figures, a man and a woman. They

were clearly the newcomers from the launch. She raked them with her glasses. She took little trouble with the man: she decided that he was good-looking, of a weak character, and like any other young man of a class to which she was accustomed. But the woman was beautiful, not merely good-looking or pretty or handsome or attractive or sweet, but beautiful in the full and absolute sense of that word. The clear tint of her skin: the perfect moulding of her neck and throat: the roundness of her chin: the symmetry of her nose and mouth: the deep blue of her eyes and her silken hair prisoned under her broad hat: her long shapely hands and slender ankles, nothing of all this escaped the scrutiny of Lady Cantire with the lorgnette; or, it must be confessed, of Kingston-Pugh without.

The pair stood for a few moments looking out over the terrace, and then the man touched the woman's arm and they turned and went into the house.

"My aunt!" repeated Kingston-Pugh, "I say, we're in luck, what?"

"She is a very beautiful woman," murmured Lady Cantire reflectively, closing her lorgnette with a snap.

"I say, you know, who is she?"

"A certain Comtesse . . . Comtesse de . . . I didn't quite catch the name," said Lady Cantire, with some truth. "Pavois told me they were coming: her husband's English, a Mr. Fennimore, I believe."

"Yes, she's it, paint me pink, if she ain't!"

"My dear Kenneth, I wish you would try and not talk like a grocer's assistant. It delights no one and is most unbecoming in . . ."

"What Boomer will do when he sees her," broke in

Kingston-Pugh, "heaven only knows; he'll burst—he'll go off pop like a chestnut on a hot shovel."

"Kenneth!" expostulated Lady Cantire.

"Well, Boomer will be all out . . ."

"I can't imagine why you have anything to do with people like that man Boomer."

"Oh, well, Lady V., we're all here together you know, and we've got to be democratic and all that nowadays."

"I do not see the necessity in the least," said Lady Cantire, as she rose from her chair. "I'm going indoors. Fitton, you can take the things up to my room; no, I'll take the bag myself. I'll warn the Countess against that man Boomer—there's no need for her to be pestered with his attentions."

As it happened, Boomer had seen the newcomers before Kingston-Pugh. He had been walking with Potter on the beach at the back of the harbour when the launch came in. He had not gone off pop, except in so far as to swear a number of soldierly oaths, and the despatch with which he climbed up on to the jetty by means of the iron staples let into the masonry, so as to be in at the death as it were, was admirable in one of his age and figure; Potter, a thinner and younger man, arriving at the landing stage but a bad second.

Lady Cantire sat in her wicker chair upon the terrace and metaphorically purred with pleasure. The Comtesse de Niverseine sat beside her and handled her knitting needles under the old lady's direction.

"Slip one, knit one, purl one . . ."

"But I do not understand your English—how do you say?—stitches. It is but to make a simple little coat—for Adrien."

"How old is he?"

"Ah, but he is young—quite young—not yet three years old. He is too young to bring with us. We had to leave him at the Château with the others."

"Then he is not your only child?"

The Comtesse laughed gaily.

"But no, *vraiment*," and she held up her slender hand and counted on her fingers—one, two, three, four—three boys and one girl. Paul and me, we have been married just five years, but Jean and Georgette are *jumeaux*—how you say it?—twins."

Lady Cantire was more delighted than ever with the Comtesse de Niverseine. To find such Victorian virtue, such domestic happiness, existing in an age which she not infrequently damned as godless, and, moreover, in a country confessedly pagan, was balm to a distressed spirit.

"I wish you could have brought your little ones with you," murmured the old lady.

The Comtesse de Niverseine—or Yvonne, to use her shorter name—put her knitting down in her lap and turned her beautiful eyes, now clouded with trouble, on Lady Cantire.

"Ah, it hurt me so to leave them, the little ones. But Paul was not well and he needed a change, and then, a hotel, Lady Cantire, is not a place for little children. I do not like to leave them behind, but my mother is looking after them. She loves them all, and they are happier there than if they were here."

"You are quite right, quite right," murmured Lady Cantire.

Indeed, Lady Cantire was in a mood to approve of almost anything that Yvonne said. In four days the old lady had succumbed completely to the beauty and

charm, the quaint wit and the old-world manner of the Comtesse. Weary of her present company and having accepted the newcomers almost before their arrival, Lady Cantire had taken the young Comtesse under her wing from the beginning. Her youth, her simplicity, her ingenuousness, pleasingly relieved at times with a worldly wisdom altogether Victorian, and a piquancy of phrase wholly Gallic, completed the conquest. Even Pavois was appeased; his knowledge of the English nobility, was, in fact, better than his knowledge of the French; as a Southerner he knew little of the North, and Niverseine, it appeared, was in Brittany. The judgment of so severe a critic as Lady Cantire (who remembered to have heard the old Marquise de Roquesnoy speak of Niverseine) was enough for him. In Paul, Lady Cantire took no especial interest: she accepted him as the husband of the Comtesse; as a presentable young man of an old Somersetshire family; the which information, indeed, she had gleaned from Yvonne. But though luck was with Paul and Yvonne in securing so early an ally such as the Lady Cantire, there were uneasy occasions. Yvonne was a born storyteller, and this, practised through many years, was apt to run away with her: nor was she always careful to warn Paul in advance.

On this very morning, for instance, Paul and Kingston-Pugh came out on to the terrace, and Yvonne, who was growing a little weary of her companion, jumped up and ran to Paul, saying:—

“The sea is lovely this morning; let us go out in the boat, and Mr. Kingston-Pugh will come with us—won’t you, Mr. Pugh? If you’ll wait, I’ll go in and change; I won’t be long.”

She waved her hand to Paul and ran into the house,

and Paul, perforce, sat down beside Lady Cantire, whom he feared and disliked in equal measure.

"I wish you could have brought your children with you," said the old lady, beaming on the unhappy Paul. "And the twins must be darlings. How old are they?"

It is, to say the least, disconcerting to any young man (and a bachelor at that) to learn suddenly that he is the father of a family, and of twins: it is even worse to have to give their ages when one's wife has not told one how many years one has been married, or of how many children one is the father.

Paul had the presence of mind to stammer:—

"Er—two years old, Lady Cantire: too young to bring out with us."

"They must be *sweet*," murmured the old lady.

"Er—er—yes," muttered Paul. He wished Lady Cantire was at the bottom of the sea, and he cursed the, in a double sense, prolific Yvonne, under his breath.

"Of course, young children are out of place in a hotel," continued Lady Cantire. "The twins *are* too young. But the others . . ."

"The others are younger still," exclaimed Paul, a little wildly. Paul had been trained as a scientist, but it is to be feared that physiology was not his strongest subject.

"Mr. Fennimore!" ejaculated Lady Cantire.

What explanation would Paul have made to Lady Cantire to excuse or repudiate a variation in the laws of Natural History will never be known, for, happily, just at this moment, Kingston-Pugh leant over the balustrade of the terrace and bawled:

"Boomer, come up here."

Lady Cantire rose and gathered up her belongings.

"Kenneth, if you must talk with your friend Boomer," she said with dignity, "I beg to be excused from joining in the conversation," and she sailed, majestically, into the house.

Paul lay back in his chair in a state of collapse, and he welcomed, with alacrity, Major Boomer's suggestions that it was eleven o'clock, and therefore time for a Bronx.

When, some ten minutes later, Yvonne ran down the steps and joined the three men on the terrace, she looked so bewitchingly lovely that even Paul forgot altogether the complaint he had against her. Her closely-fitting jumper of green silk suited her to perfection: the mass of her hair, escaping from under her small turban of green wool in a riot of spun gold, gleamed in the sunlight: her small feet, cased in white doe-skin, tapped impatiently on the stones of the terrace, and the Major stared at her with such insistence that one less magnanimous, in these matters, than Yvonne, might even have found an occasion for offence.

But she smiled happily and equally on all three men.

"Major Boomer, you will come too? We are going out in the launch and to go right around the island—like that," and she made a large circle in the air with her hand.

"Delighted—delighted to come," stammered the Major, pulling at his moustache and flushing an even deeper red.

"*Bien: allons*—let us go," and Yvonne led the way down the steps from the terrace.

That afternoon, over a cup of tea, Lady Cantire sought light upon an unnatural phenomenon. It was not that she had the slightest suspicion of the Com-

tesse de Niverseine, but Paul's words were, at least, odd; and Lady Cantire did not like oddity. And the Comtesse de Niverseine had explained:—

"Oh, the dear Paul, it is so like him; he was thinking of Marie, the youngest. She's just two years old and he's devoted to her. He thinks more of Marie than of all the others—which is really rather sweet of him. No—why, Michel and Georgette are four years old now . . ."

"Michel?"

"Yes, the twins . . ."

"But Comtesse, I thought you said the boy was called Jean?"

"Jean Michel," replied Yvonne; "he was christened Jean after Paul's father, and Michel after my brother—poor Michel, who was killed in the war." The blue eyes of the Comtesse de Niverseine filled with tears.

"He was the *as* of his sector: he fell from two thousand metres together with the Boche *avion* he attacked. They said . . ."

Lady Cantire laid her hand on Yvonne's arm.

"Let us be thankful that the awful war is over, and that your husband has been spared . . ."

"After being twice wounded," sobbed Yvonne. "How I suffered! After every *permission* I never thought I should see him again."

Lady Cantire left Yvonne to go upstairs to dress for dinner more than ever assured that the Countess was the most beautiful, the most charming and the most lovable of women; and she began to hold Paul in better opinion. To be so loving a father and husband, and so gallant a soldier: to be twice wounded for one's country: these are virtues not to be hid—or so thought

Lady Cantire. It caused some confusion later, however, that while Yvonne was recounting Paul's exploits, Paul himself (who, to do him justice, made no secret of the part he played in the campaign) was exchanging war reminiscences with Major Boomer.

"Of course, I was never actually in the line, though I have been under shell-fire a number of times and lucky enough never to be hit," he had said. Whilst the Major, who had spent most of his time during the war in a steam launch between Merville and Calais—a steam launch with a lovely polished copper funnel and nickel fittings, as befitted a field officer of the I.W.T.—retailed, at some length, certain of his affairs of gallantry in the Back Areas, none of which were particularly creditable to any of the parties concerned.

It has been said by the cynic that to married folk alone is reserved the luxury of quarreling in bed. Those in such a position, who do not enjoy the warrant of society in this matter, dare not (it has been urged) fall out with all the world against them. So Paul, it may be considered, lent, in some sort, a moral aspect to a relationship to be deplored even by the most free-thinking, in his words to Yvonne that night. But Yvonne laughed happily and made nothing of it.

"*Chéri*, I know I ought to have told you how many children you have, and how long we have been married—and many other things. But I did not know at all myself until I was talking to Lady Cantire; she is so fond of children that I made it three—or was it four?—I forget."

"But good heavens, Yvonne, if you don't remember . . ."

"Dear Paul, that is all right; Lady Cantire adores me, and the others don't matter. Though I wish I could

remember the children's names; but then, I never could remember names—only faces. Oh, and Paul dear, don't forget you've been wounded twice . . ."

Paul sat up in bed with a jerk.

"Good God!" he groaned.

But Yvonne nestled her golden head deeper into the pillow and refused to listen.

"Don't talk to me, I'm going to sleep."

For long after Yvonne had fallen into a dreamless sleep, Paul lay awake and wide-eyed, thinking upon a situation that had seemed simple, but now not so simple: a state of affairs that grew more difficult the more he thought upon it; and when, an hour later, he at last fell asleep, it was but to pass into uneasy dreams.

CHAPTER VIII: PLAYMATES IN ARCADY

THE sun is a great dispeller of ill humours. He is the healer, the life bringer. He is the only true doctor to the troubled mind. He is the best apothecary in the world. There is no tonic sold for gold over any chemist's counter so remedial as that celestial pick-me-up which is poured for nothing at day-break over the wide counter which is the rim of Earth.

Paul had fallen asleep over night but to hob-nob with distressful dreams, yet the memory of this and his anger with Yvonne, vanished in the morning sunlight as had the mist above the meadows two hours earlier.

He stood before the wide open window, bathed in golden light, breathing in the sweet air, magically compounded of sea-salt and the fragrance of so many flowers, in great gulps, and happily forgetful that he had ever been at odds with anyone. He threw out his arms wide as if to embrace the sun and all the sky, in sheer love of life, only to have them, in a second, without warning, pinioned at his side, by two encircling arms from behind: to be lost in a cloud of silken hair: to feel warm kisses on his neck, and to hear an echo of laughter and the whisper of love names in his ear.

The sun, the wide sea, this quiet island and Argive Helen together did conspire to put Paul into a better mind, and as day followed day without untoward happening, Paul fell easily into that rare humour, so hard to hold in this egotistical age, and forgot the cares

of To-morrow in the delight of To-day; and, hourly, he grew more in love with Yvonne.

So, also, did all others in the Ile de l'Escope. The forgetfulness of Yvonne as to certain details: her genius as a teller of stories, which together gave rise to odd occasions, no longer troubled Paul. The names and ages of his children, the number and nature of his wounds, became, by repetition, fixed even in the mind of Yvonne, and a certain confusion in parents and the shifting topography of Niverseine mattered nothing to a society which to a man, and even to a woman, were slaves to Helen. There were even material witnesses to the truth.

Old Mr. Ockrington, for example, had met the old Comte de Niverseine many years ago. He sat in his wheeled chair in a sheltered corner of the terrace, with Yvonne beside him, and the little electric battery and mouth-piece between them, so that he might miss no word spoken. He had even stayed a few days, long before Yvonne was born, at the old château, and he recalled, with the help of the Comtesse, the aspect of that picturesque pile.

He saw it quite clearly in his mind, as it had stood then, a sombre monument between dark woods. A broad stone terrace, grey with lichen, bearing upon every pedestal a shallow Grecian vase, made a stage from which the great square mass of the château with its Doric columns and wide pediment stood out against a background of dark trees. From the terrace, the grass land fell away in a gentle slope for more than a mile, with the thick woods on either side; a strip of grass no wider than the terrace where it left the château, but widening with the slope of the land to the lake at the far end. To the right, at the lake's edge,

stood a small Doric temple capped with a bronze cupola, turned by rain and weather to a bright green; and beyond the lake, a tall gate of iron, finely wrought and flanked by two stone griffins on tall pillars, rose out of the grass; for this gate was never used and the way in to the château lay by the avenue on the other side.

Thus did Mr. Ockrington remember to have seen the Château Niverseine when he was a young man and the old Count, Yvonne's grandfather, had been his host. Canon Fairmead, on the other hand, after a wonderful walk with the Comtesse to the high cliffs at the back of the island, pictured the château otherwise.

Yvonne had sat down on a rock outcrop at the cliff's edge and gazed dreamily down upon the blue water which encircled the rocks below. The Canon stood beside her.

"It is, my dear Comtesse, the most wonderful view in the island," he had said, for he was showman on this occasion.

Yvonne sighed pensively and looking up with a rare smile, in which a little pain of regret was equally blended with the delight of happy memories, said:

"It makes me to remember my Niverseine, when I was a little girl—*une petite sauvage, vraiment*—but so happy."

"Are you not happy—here and now, Comtesse?" murmured the good Canon, with a solicitude very praiseworthy in one whose duty it is to console.

And the Comtesse de Niverseine had laughed in the face of the sun and the sea, happily, yet there were tears which quivered upon her long lashes.

"*Mon père, je suis heureuse.* I am happy, yes, but

can one be *sans souci*, who has three—five little children?"

It is perhaps to be regretted that a partaker of one sacrament should so speak to a priest of another, yet it cannot be denied that Canon Fairmead was charmed. To be addressed as father, as to be addressed as *maître*, is irresistible to those with slight claims to these titles. The Canon was but human, so human that he very nearly said:

"Comtesse, you are dear," instead of the more formal but none the less sincere:

"My dear Comtesse, I am thinking that Mr. Fennimore must be a very happy man."

"Dear Paul," sighed Yvonne, "but one would always wish to be again a child; and the big cliffs above the château were just like this."

So Canon Fairmead learned to picture Niverseine as a dark and gloomy fortress by the sea, a relic of Norman times when safety against attack was of more moment than comfort. Four round towers stood at the four corners of the square, the old walls were feet thick, pierced with arrow slits and topped with grim battlements. The great keep rose in the middle: a draw-bridge spanned a moat, now dry and filled with nettles and flowers, and the chains of the bridge had long since rusted into disuse. The castle stood at the head of a deep cleft or gorge running down to the sea. Sea birds circled around it. In summer, the high cliffs were carpeted with flowers, but in winter the coast was bare and desolate. Storms swept in from the Atlantic and buffeted the old castle, until even the crackling of the logs in the great hall was drowned with the sighing of the wind and the echo of seas

crashing on the rock-bound coast. There was a secret tunnel underground from the castle to the little quay at the end of the gorge below, long out of use, into which the children were not allowed to go; there were grim legends of former Counts of Niverseine and there was a ghost; and the present Count, an austere and disappointed man, played the tragic part of the impoverished aristocrat. There was little company at Château Niverseine, for the Countess had died when the children were young. The local curé, a retired colonel of infantry, one or two of the *petite noblesse* of the neighbourhood, were all the visitors; and the Count was occupied but with his hobby of heraldry, with the breeding of his dogs or with a tenantry as impoverished as himself. It was a gloomy picture, as Yvonne painted it, yet to be remembered happily as the place of one's childhood, as a stage of so many never to be forgotten plays.

Lady Cantire described the Château Niverseine at second hand to the Misses Vereker-Prynne as a rambling building of high gables and many turrets, set in the green meadows beside the river. There was some doubt as to the name of the river, Lady Cantire's geography being as insecure as Yvonne's; so Lady Cantire "believed" that it was the Seine and left it at that. The Count, it seemed, was a quite cheerful aristocrat with a large family, a gift for hospitality and a passion for fly-fishing. It seemed there was an Hôtel Niverseine belonging to the family in the Rue de Grenelle, but that the Count seldom went to Paris. He was a Royalist, a strong supporter of the Catholic party and disliked rubbing shoulders with the ruck of Jews and Socialists now in power. Dr. Hanson, who had left the hunting of *Mimaeseoptilus ochrearia* to

show Yvonne some very beautiful orchids growing down by the stream, vaguely conceived the Château Niverseine to be built into a small village huddled on the top of a precipitous hill, rather after the manner of a miniature Carcassone.

Major Boomer and Kingston-Pugh, who were much with the Comtesse, would doubtless have formed even other pictures of this château had they shown the slightest interest in such matters, but they were far too taken up with the present to enquire into the past. The sunlight in her hair: the light touch of her fingers; the laughter in her eyes, all these were more to them than pedigrees or the account of many mansions, and Yvonne was careful never to bore her audience.

Had the company at the Château Falaise been more homogeneous, it is possible that Yvonne's imagination might still have caused trouble, so as to suspect her of being other than she made herself out to be. But the society on the Ile de l'Escope at this time, at the end of the war, was even heterogeneous, and the good fortune of Lady Cantire's acceptance was enough for all.

Day followed day in the Ile de l'Escope without incident in an ordered seemliness, as dream to dream passes to the happy dreamer. No clouds rose out of the horizon to veil the sun: no wind came from the earth's end to ruffle the placid surface of the sea. The happy business of doing nothing in particular occupied everybody's time. To climb the cliffs for flowers: to bathe and afterwards to lie on the sun-hot rock between sleep and wakefulness: to dive into the deep pools: to fish through lazy hours: to circle the island in the launch and to discover hidden beaches and caves, wonderful with coloured light: to be free of noise and a crowd: to have no purpose in view and no care for

money and no thought of time, was very sweet indeed to Yvonne, and if she was lovely when she first came into the island harbour, she grew more beautiful each day, until all on the island, from the waiter at her table and the fisherman who dug bait for her to Lady Cantire and even Pavois himself, were very much her slaves. All but two, for there were yet two people on the island to whom the coming of Yvonne was no more than that of any common guest, who troubled neither to seek nor to avoid her company, to whom her youth and her beauty, her wit and her birth were of no account.

They were John Paterson and Dr. Hanson's daughter, Cecily.

Who John Paterson was or whence he had come or why he was here, even the perseverance of Lady Cantire had failed to answer. There was nothing in any way mysterious about the man, nothing out of the ordinary. He was of an average height and of a heavy build. His face was large and round, irregular in feature, inclined to be a little morose in rest, but lighting up very vividly when he spoke. His eyes were of light blue, shadowy with dreams: his hair, a brown mop upon his head, unbrushed and unbrushable: his age might have been anything between thirty-five and fifty. He spoke French fluently, when he wished to do so (as at times he did to Yvonne) and was an entertaining talker. He seemed to have been everywhere, to be a man of learning and of some wealth, but he made no effort to talk or walk with Yvonne. He did not, on the other hand, run away from her. That, at least, would have been more flattering than to treat her (as she expressed it pathetically to Paul) as though she were a man. As the days passed, she grew more

interested in Paterson than Paul suspected or than she herself imagined.

That Cecily Hanson should not trouble her small head about Yvonne worried Yvonne not at all. It was understandable. That she should show no sign of enmity against so fair a rival was less explicable, for John Paterson rarely spoke to Cecily and all the other men in the island were at the beck of the Comtesse de Niverseine. Yvonne, at last, dismissed her from her mind with a shrug of her pretty shoulders.

"I do not understand the girl," she said to Paul, "she walks by herself all day. She has no man: I have them all, but she does not hate me."

"She is an odd child," murmured Paul, lazily.

In point of fact, Yvonne had won no one from his allegiance to Cecily, for Cecily had walked by herself before Yvonne ever came to the island; whilst, on the other hand, Cecily had won away from Yvonne, one Lux, an Alsatian wolf hound, and Cecily no longer climbed the cliffs or ranged through the woods by herself. Lux went with her. Yvonne hardly noticed this disaffection: she had little thought for dogs.

CHAPTER IX: RECIPE FOR A LOVE PHILTRE

THE Gardens of the Luxembourg were full of flowers. Upon the benches a miscellany of folk dozed happily in the sunshine. Around the pond, a number of children of all ages, of all classes, in a motley of clothing, were busy with boats. All manner of ships sailed upon this placid sea: from great schooners, a full metre from stem to stern, rigged from top-sail to spinnaker, complete to every sheet and halyard, to the toy boat of painted tin at a few sous. The place was noisy with the shouting and laughter of the children, and the orders of their elders against the wetting of feet, the spotting of clean clothes or the falling into the water.

In these pleasant gardens and among this noisy and happy throng walked Monica Van't Hoff. She might have found much to smile at in the scene around her. Almost at her feet a small child in a red tunic, whose nose and curly black hair witnessed his race, was busy negotiating a mortgage on a sunk vessel (the salvage of which seemed to be uncertain) with a skill of which his father would have been proud. A siren of some eight years, with a green frock and a mop of copper-coloured hair, was shamelessly inciting a boy lover to recover her ship at the risk of a wetting and the anger of those in authority; and two little boys in blue tunics were attacking one another in an amateurish kind of

way to the huge delight of a slim damsel in pigtailed and a printed frock, who was the cause of war.

But Monica did not smile at any of these things; she saw little of what was happening around her. She walked with bowed head and unseeing eyes, so that she very nearly stepped upon a battleship which had been dry-docked on the pathway, and only avoided the accident by the cries of the shipowner.

About half-past twelve she left the gardens and walked across the road to Foyot's; but even the entertainment of so noted a kitchen failed to make her more cheerful and she ate her food and drank some white wine in a listless manner.

Monica Van't Hoff, indeed, was suffering from two diseases particular to this age, loneliness and remorse; though she would have confessed to neither, and chose to dub Paris empty when it was full as an egg, to damn its entertainment as dull when it had never been more gay, and even to grumble at the weather when the sun shone.

She went back to her hotel and moped and made excuse to quarrel with the comfort and service of the Clarice, which is the best in Europe. Even the arrival and unpacking of some furs from the Rue St. Honoré, of a robe from Paquin, and a skirt from Cheruit and lingerie from Madeleine and from Puska and perfume from Arys failed to put her in a good temper. She sat and yawned that evening through a performance of *Thaïs* at the Opera and awoke to the conclusion next morning that Paris was unbearable. She scribbled a reply-paid telegram for rooms and rang for her maid.

She might have gone back to England, but she had left Ushar because it had been insufferably dull after

the camp at la Calotterie, and the Manor House, though large, seemed, at the moment, hardly large enough for herself and her sisters and the fluffy-haired woman whom her brother was fool enough to want to marry. So she had come to Paris.

And now even Paris failed to amuse her.

She looked back with regret upon what she had already, in a few short weeks, begun to call the good old days of war. She longed for the camp: for the urgency of effort: for the circumstance of command: for the delight of responsibility, the which, when once tasted, is never quite to be replaced by any pinchbeck entertainment.

In this, she was but one among a multitude. For the bringing into the war of so many women of whom a number had before no aim in life and no experience of service of any kind, had loosed in turn, at the end of the war, a number of women with nothing whatever to do. Once to have done work well: once to have been one of a happy company now disbanded, is a regretful being. The claims of society, family bickerings, even the change of travel, are but poor substitutes for the work of war: as well expect one whose palate has become used to Bordeaux and brandy to be content with milk and soda or ginger-beer.

So Monica thought much of happy days at la Calotterie; and with the memory of la Calotterie came the remembrance of Paul.

No woman readily forgets a man who has wooed her: even if she does not love him. Moreover, Paul had been much in attendance upon her during the last six months and she missed him. Also, at the back of her mind, not altogether to be hidden behind a lumber of other thoughts and memories, was the thought that

she had been a little unkind to him: a little too ready to take account of frailties that were rather generous than otherwise: to make too much of a love of rhetoric: to have been needlessly harsh in her dismissal of him.

She was (she assured herself) not the least little bit in love with him; but she was sorry for him. She hated to have had to refuse him: especially at a time when he too (like her) had left the army and many friends and (like her) might well be lonely and out of humour with the world. She remembered his bombast: his threat of descending dog-wards: his hint as to what might well be the fate of the rejected lover and the disbanded soldier under the double stimulus. She had laughed at him in the woods of la Calotterie. The memory of that affair seemed now to be less comic. She began to reproach herself in the matter. Paul, after all, might have been more deeply moved, more sincere in his intention, than she had taken him to be. In which case, she had been much to blame in her words on leaving him: she might become, in a real sense, responsible for—for anything that might happen. She did not try to analyze what these happenings might be. It was enough that they might be, in some way, due to her.

This thought worried her not a little. From time to time she would persuade herself that, of course, Paul's love of rhetoric had but led him to talk thus: that his words meant nothing. But the uneasy belief that he had spoken truly remained with her.

She received, by the evening, a telegram that rooms had been reserved for her, and staying in Paris only to add a few items to her wardrobe and to reserve a seat on the train, she caught, three days later, the ten o'clock train for the South. The bustle and little

business of departure had for a while driven Paul out of her mind, and she settled herself down into her corner seat in a better frame of mind than she had been in for some days. She might have rid herself of any concern about Paul had she not bought a *Times* on the bookstall to read during the journey. Headlines and matters of European import all fall a little flat in the reading, after years of battle and tales of disaster and victory: the leader page was more than commonly dull; but turning to the page of Law Court reports, her eye was held by the long report of a case in which the firm of Cohen, Binetta et Cie., of Paris, sought payment from the executors of the estate for goods supplied to a suicide.

The case was a painful one. The dead man appeared to have been a captain in the Army, and to have been living with a woman of a rapacity above the ordinary of her kind. At least, clothes and furs to the sum of over ten thousand pounds had been ordered for her by the deceased, of which sum two-thirds had been paid. The firm of Messrs. Cohen, Binetta et Cie. sued the executors for the payment of the rest of the debt. The case was of interest from the legal point of view and the summing up of the learned judge was a masterly exposition upon an obscure point of law, but the human side of the affair only appealed to Monica, and it was inevitable that she should be reminded of Paul by it. Indeed, the memory of this case haunted her throughout the journey: she wondered if the unhappy officer had also been rejected by the woman he loved and taunted into excess and despair: she thought more kindly of Paul and more hardly of herself than she had yet done. She was heartily glad when the long and wearisome journey drew near to its end. She

looked forward with impatience to the quiet of the Ile de l'Escope and the decent company of the Château Falaise and the reasonable chance of finding someone there whom she knew.

* * * * *

Paul had christened it "Table Bay"; not because the little creek mimicked in pigmy the African original, but because a wide and flat rock, round as though it had been a table, rose out of the water in the middle of the pool.

It was a place that might have been especially so ordered and set apart for the amphibious: a secret cove, hidden carefully away, and only to be revealed to lovers and water-lovers, who would be alone with the sun and the wet rocks and the sea. Paul had discovered the place and he took pride in his finding of it, for the way there was not easy: indeed, it was by accident and not by design, by good luck only, that Paul had found a way down from the top of the cliff to the pool below.

For the first part of the descent, the cliff face was much broken and the way easy enough to the active; but half way down, a great slab or shelf of rock, thrust outwards and upwards by some volcanic action, seemed to cut off any further progress. At the base, however, of this shelf there was a narrow cleft cut into the cliff, the which, once one had learnt the footholds, it was easy enough to climb down into a long and narrow cave, which formed the upper end of the cove like a stem to a funnel. From the cave, the rock floor sloped gently to the little beach of fine, silver sand, which lay directly under the shadow of the overhanging rock above. On either hand rock promontories ran out into the sea, enclosing a pool of blue-green water some fifty

yards across. Out of the middle of this pool and about thirty yards from the narrow beach, rose the round, flat rock from which Paul had named the cove. It lay, smooth and round and black as though it was afloat upon the still water, and not the flat top of a rock pillar, half a hundred feet high, rising out of the foundations of the sea.

In this rock-ringed pool, Paul and Yvonne were used to bathe of a morning, did they wish to be alone or feel out of humour with the strip of sand below the harbour, where were the bathing tents. The cave under the hanging rock made an admirable place in which to unrobe and the table-rock was better than any diving-board.

In the morning, the narrow beach lay in shadow, but the rocks on either side ran out into the sunlight, and above all the table rock itself lay basking in the sun all day long. This rock was some fifteen feet across and to swim out through the cool, green water and to climb up on to its warm top and lie there in the sun until ready to fall again into the water, was a delight that never palled however many times repeated. With Yvonne and the rock island, Paul devised the most wonderful of games: for it was the old game of "I am king of the castle," with Paul or Yvonne being king or queen in turn, and the broad rock, the castle and the attacking rascal, merman or mermaid, as the case might be. Whoever was on the rock, first, had to keep the other off it, if he could, and save himself from being dragged off it into the water; and if and when the rascal had at length landed, the king or the queen fought with the invader a battle royal until one or the other or more often both, locked in one another's arms, reeled drunkenly to the island's edge to plunge head-

long into the cool sea beneath a shower of silver spray. It was the jolliest game in the world, and, when weary of attack and counter-attack, one could call a truce and lie together in amity on the hot face of the rock under the sun, until the salt water dried on one's skin to a fine powder of sweet sea-salt and the dark water splashes on the rock grew smaller and yet smaller until pin-point size, and then vanished: until the thin fabric of one's bathing dress ceased to cling wetly to the flesh and lay loose and dry and warm away from the skin: until one became all a-tingle in the hot sunshine, and the dry rock almost too hot to the touch, and one was ready once again to leap up and dive into deep water.

One morning, about ten days after Paul and Yvonne had come to the Ile de l'Escope, Yvonne sat upon the table rock and laughed joyously at Paul swimming lazily in the sea beneath her. Never had he thought her more lovely or found her more to be desired, and he looked upon her where she sat there, with her knees drawn up to her chin and her hands clasped around them. Her neck and her slender arms, whose smoothness no salt sea could roughen, whose white purity no sun could stain, stood out against the black silk of her bathing dress like pearl against jet: her hair was squeezed tightly into a round black silk cap, from under the sides of which spun gold slipped out truant behind her small ears: her soft, white feet might well have made the very sea jealous of the rock upon which they pressed. Paul lay upon the green water and gazed wide-eyed upon this Nereid on a rock and quoted poetry in ecstasy:

"And they hailed thee re-risen, O Thalassian,
Foam-white, from the foam!"

And Yvonne challenged him to climb up her (an he could) back into the sea. So he went up on to the rock beside her, but in a sea he changed her mind and would have no more for the moment, but, as he shook the salt from his eyes and hair, she looked down upon his blue eyes wide open, earnestly gazing at him, and asked him if he was happy and if he still

"How can you ask such a question?"

"And you are happy?"

"I am in love."

"Dear Paul, kiss me."

"Then, more kisses! Did I stop them, when the lion seemed so few?" murmured Paul, taking her in his arms; and they lay thus, without saying words, upon the warm rock beneath the eaves of the sea birds circled above them and the waves gently against the rocks, and out to sea a white sail upon the blue water grew nearer and larger, and came the sails of a boat making for the island.

"Some more people arriving," said Yvonne suddenly—"that is the *Marie* from Port St. Pierre."

"What do I care for a lot of stuffy people?" cried Paul, rather inconsequently. "I want you."

But Yvonne slipped from him and, running to the edge of the rock, cried, "You must catch me if I don't dive into deep water. Paul dropped in. The white sails of the *Marie* passed out of sight behind the rock barrier and into the harbour.

It was half an hour before lunch time. A number of people sat or walked upon the broad terrace of the hotel. Lady Cantire sat in her usual place on the balustrade of the terrace: she was busy

socket needle and, on the stone balustrade, on her left hand, stood her large and elaborate work-basket, full of silks and wools, needles and thread, scissors and thimbles and a miscellany of useful and useless odds and ends. Opposite her, on the balustrade, sat Kingston-Pugh, smoking a cigarette and swinging his legs to and fro and pretending to listen to Hooper, who was becoming eloquent on behalf of prohibition in America with the help of a silver fizz.

Yvonne lay back in a long, easy chair and listened with half-closed eyes to the compliments of Major Boomer who was standing by her. She felt sleepy after her morning's bathe and, under the shelter of the wide hat which she wore, she made small attempt to keep her eyes open. Paul turned his back upon Boomer and the sleepy Yvonne and talked to Paterson, who was explaining to him the rigging peculiar to the fishing boats of that part of the coast, as shown in that of the *Marie*, which was standing out from the harbour below them, under full sail.

Further along the terrace, Cecily Hanson sprawled on the grass and played with Lux. Dr. Hanson sat in an uncomfortable, enamelled-iron chair and re-read the *Times*. At the far end of the terrace, Canon Fairmead was trying to make old Ockrington (who had left his electric battery indoors) understand what he was saying.

It was a scene of a kind very commonly to be found in any expensive and quite reputable hotel: a number of intelligent people listening to one another with the utmost boredom.

Kingston-Pugh had no interest in prohibition, and Lady Cantire thoroughly disliked Hooper. She wielded her needles in grim silence, whilst Kingston-Pugh

yawned behind his hand. Hooper continued to be patriotic and full of figures and pitiless to his audience. Yvonne wished Major Boomer would go away, and would have told him so quite frankly had she not felt too sleepy even for that effort. Paul, who always felt, for some odd reason, a little uneasy in Paterson's presence, and had no care for boats, wished simply to be left alone to order another cock-tail. Dr. Hanson read the *Times*, which he had seen before, and wished it was lunch time. Old Ockrington who listened, perforce, to the Canon upon the thriftlessness of the working classes, heard about one word in three and had a vague impression that the worthy priest was seeking material support for some mission. He wished that he would speak a little more distinctly and say how much he needed and why. The only two on the terrace who were quite content with each other's company, and in no way bored, were Cecily and the dog, Lux, who played a very jolly and ferocious game together with a round cork float from a fishing-net, which Lux had brought up from the beach.

Above, the sun shone out of a blue sky; below, there stretched the sea as though it had been cut in sapphire, unsullied by white foam or break of wave. Rose petals that had fallen upon the stones of the terrace lay where they had fallen, untroubled by any puff of wind. The ash of a cigarette, knocked off against the edge of the stone coping, fell among the flowers a dozen feet below in the true perpendicular. A great butterfly, all blue and orange, flapped its way slowly and comfortably along the terrace like an old lady crossing a village green. The small noise of human talk on the terrace drowned all other noises of so still a place, so that

with four folk talking within an acre, one no longer heard the bees or the lizards, the distant call of the sea-birds or the faint echo of the sea against the rocks below. Even, it seemed the voice of America upon the sins of the flesh: of the Church upon the sins of the people: of the Army upon love of woman: of Cecily to her dog, grew more faint and more broken in this earthly stillness, under this magic of the noonday hush before lunch.

It is a matter for wonder and of some dramatic worth that the coming of one actor and the speaking of one name should make for action on such a stage. The sound of footsteps on the terrace of one coming from the house was a matter of no notice in itself. Only three on the terrace had eyes towards the house, and Cecily returned to Lux and the cork after a casual glance at the woman who was approaching from the house, whilst Major Boomer, seeing in the stranger one of no beauty according to his standard, turned once more to try and get a word from Yvonne, who was now almost asleep.

The third who faced the house was Kingston-Pugh, but it was not until the newcomer was almost among them that he really saw her and knew her and remembered her name.

"Monica," he cried, "where on earth have you sprung from?"

At the sound of Kingston-Pugh's voice, Paul swung round with his back to the sea. Before him and only half-a-dozen paces away stood Monica Van't Hoff.

"Why, Paul, you here?" cried Monica. "This is jolly." But Paul merely stared wide-eyed at Monica, his two hands gripping the edge of the stone coping

behind him. He seemed to be trying to find words to say, but before he was able to utter more than the one word "Monica," Lady Cantire broke in with:

"Goodness gracious, it's Monica Van't Hoff. I thought you were still canteening in France; and you know Mr. Fennimore? How delightful—and the Countess . . ."

"Mr. Fennimore?" began Monica, looking from the unhappy Paul to Lady Cantire, "I don't . . ."

But Monica never finished her sentence. There was a dull crash as of something having fallen from a height, and a smothered oath from Kingston-Pugh and a cry from Lady Cantire, and the large square work-basket, that had stood on the balustrade by Kingston-Pugh's elbow, was no more to be seen, for it lay, upside down, in the garden below, with its contents scattered among the flower-beds.

"I say, I'm most awfully sorry, Lady V.," began Kingston-Pugh, "I never saw your basket there and I swung my elbow round and before I could save it, it had gone over, you know. Really, I am awfully sorry—so clumsy of me . . ."

But Lady Cantire was pale with anger and would listen to no apologies. She rose from her chair with dignity and glared at Kingston-Pugh.

"Such clumsiness," she said, freezingly, "would be shameful in a schoolboy, but then your manners, Kenneth, have always been miserable. I am going in to lunch. I leave you to recover my work-basket; and be careful to find everything that was in it: not a needle must be missing. You can come and make your apologies to me when you give me back the basket precisely as it was before you knocked it over."

Lady Cantire stalked majestically into the house.

"That's torn it," said Kingston-Pugh, cheerfully, as he watched the old lady walk away. "Monica, come down and help me pick up the pins and needles and things; I'll never find 'em all without a woman to help me," and before Monica quite knew what she was doing, she was following Kingston-Pugh down the steps to the lower garden. Hooper, robbed of his hearers, finished his silver-fizz at a gulp and hastened towards the house. Yvonne, now quite awake, sat up in her chair and stared after Monica and Kingston-Pugh as they disappeared down the steps from the terrace.

"Pugh's done it, all right," laughed Major Boomer, who had noticed nothing but the affair of the work-basket, "it will be some time before he can make his peace with the old lady."

Paul continued to stare before him into nothingness. Paterson sat upon the stone balustrade and watched Paul's face. Canon Fairmead continued to bellow at Ockrington: Cecily to play with Lux: Dr. Hanson to read the *Times*. At length Yvonne jumped up from her chair and took Paul by the arm.

"*Allons-y*," she cried, gaily, "*j'ai faim*." They went together into the house. The Major sighed sentimentally. Paterson continued to look thoughtful. In the lower garden, Monica and Kingston-Pugh stood and gazed down upon the litter in the flower-bed.

"I don't wonder Lady V. is fed up with you," said Monica. "It was damned clumsy of you, Kenneth."

Kingston-Pugh grunted unintelligibly and dropped on his knees among the flowers.

"I say, do you know Paul? He's quite a dear boy, but why he should look like a stuck pig . . ."

"Fennimore?" muttered Pugh among the flowers—

"here's a box of needles upset here: devil of a business to find 'em in this stuff."

"His name's not Fennimore, it's Bellamy."

Kingston-Pugh rose from the flower bed and straightened his back.

"I don't doubt it. How do you know him?"

"He was at G.H.Q. with me: I've known him for about a year."

"He didn't seem altogether pleased to see you," suggested Kenneth.

Monica looked steadily at Kingston-Pugh. There was a look of trouble in her wide grey eyes.

"Kenneth," she said slowly, "he loved me. I sent him away. I was harsh to him: too harsh to him, I think. I should have dismissed him more gently. Perhaps he thinks ill of me . . . I have hurt him . . . but why does he call himself—what is it?—Fennimore?"

Pugh brushed away the dirt from the knees of his trousers before he replied:

"Well, you see, there's his wife . . ."

"His *wife*!" cried Monica.

"Well, the Comtesse."

"What Comtesse?"

"Calls herself the Comtesse de Niverseine and that old fool of a Cantire is dotty about her. Charming woman, to be sure; took the place by storm. Big château somewhere: old royalist family: three or four children, too young to bring 'em along."

"Four children!" echoed Monica, faintly.

"And two twins—or is it one twin!—two out of the four, I mean," continued Kingston-Pugh, gravely.

"Was that the woman in the long chair on the terrace in the silk jumper?"

"With the fair hair and big hat?"

"Yes."

Pugh nodded.

Monica Van't Hoff stood staring down upon the overturned work-basket in the flower-bed for some seconds without speaking. When she spoke at last it was with an obvious effort.

"Kenneth, that woman is not his wife."

"So I gather."

"They will have to go."

"Who?"

"Paul—and this woman."

"Why?"

"Because the whole business is a gross imposture: this so-called Countess is some *demi-mondaine* Paul has picked up somewhere. They *can't* stay on here: Pavois must be told. How can I . . . ?"

"You can't do it, Monica," broke in Kingston-Pugh, earnestly. "Don't you see, you can't do it? What's the situation? You turned down this fellow, I understand, before you left G.H.Q. He's demobilised, picks up this woman at Monte or somewhere, buys a launch and brings her here. They pass as a French countess and her English husband and observe the proprieties. . . . If you blow the gaff on 'em, of course they'd have to clear. But I don't see you doing it. You turn the poor blighter down; tell him to go to the devil . . ."

"I never told him . . ." began Monica, and then stopped and looked almost as if she was about to cry.

". . . and then cause a scene and have him turned out of the hotel because he's living with someone who's not his wife. It's not a pretty part to play, and to say the least of it, it ain't sportin'. If you love the fellow you had no business to give him the chuck, and if you

don't love him, it's no concern of yours what he's doing here. Either way, you can't interfere."

"I think you are a beast," cried Monica, grinding her heel into the earth of the foot-path. "How dare you say I love him: I *hate* him!"

"Anyway, you can't say anything. Help me pick up these damned needles."

For some minutes, Monica bent over the flower-bed in silence. When, presently, she spoke again, it was in a gentler tone.

"Kenneth, you are right. I cannot say anything, for this is all my fault: it is my fault that Paul . . . but I will not stay in the same house with that woman. I will stay a couple of days for the look of things, and then go on to Hyères or somewhere. I'm glad I didn't give the show away just now on the terrace: it was a lucky thing that you knocked over the work-basket."

"Very fortunate," agreed Kingston-Pugh, drily.

CHAPTER X: A COUNT WITH AN ACCOUNT

MONICA VAN'T HOFF lay awake half the night. Remorse and regret, a wounded vanity, love and pity, jealousy and hate, and the abasement of self-accusation, all in turn tormented her and drove away the healing virtues of sleep. Lying with open eyes through the still hours, whilst the white patch of moonlight on the floor slowly precessed around the circle, growing narrower and longer as the moon sank towards the west, she admitted to herself secretly that she loved Paul, that she had always loved Paul, even in the woods of la Calotterie, and that she would never forgive him: that she never could forgive herself. This last thought grew above all other thoughts and became a pain in the heart to deaden all other pains, so that, as the hours passed, the hurt of her pride became less until no longer remembered, and her anger and jealousy died away into pity, and there alone stayed with her, when at last she fell asleep, bitter remorse for having driven her lover to such a pass. With a chastened mood and a humble spirit she lay penitent: accusing herself of all: ready and wishful to save Paul at any cost to pride and vanity: to forgive so that she herself might be forgiven: to love that she herself might be loved: to repair the evil she herself had caused. Only in such mind as this was she able, an hour before daylight, to fall, uneasily, asleep.

Paul also slept ill.

The troubles which kept him awake were not so

praiseworthy as those of Monica, though they were equal in effect.

He had seen nothing of Monica since her arrival and the fiasco of the work-basket. She had busied herself in her room with a long unpacking during the afternoon. She drank tea with Lady Cantire and the Comtesse de Niverseine (who showed no proper sense of shame) and to whom Monica was very gracious. Paul, after listening to a discussion on baby-linen, somewhat hampered by the limitations of Yvonne's English vocabulary, allowed himself to be taken away by Kingston-Pugh to explore a newly-discovered cave. Any attempt to see Monica alone after dinner that evening had been equally hopeless. After drinking coffee on the terrace with half the hotel about her, she let Cecily lead her away to see the sunset from the high cliff at the west of the island. When she returned, she went to bed, and though Paul had waited in the hope of speaking to her alone when she came in, his patience was unrewarded, since she took Cecily up to her room to show her the latest spoils from Paris.

So Paul went to bed ill at ease and in a bad temper, which the tranquillity of Yvonne did not improve. He cursed the evil chance which had brought Monica to the Ile de l'Escope, and spoke of her to Yvonne in a manner hardly creditable even in a rejected lover.

"I do not ask if you love her now, *petit lapin*," answered Yvonne, as she stood before Paul, her soft hair in a golden mist around her head, her slender limbs stained from ivory to rose in the light of the shaded lamps, so that Paul could but take her in his arms and kiss her and swear that he loved, and could ever love, none but her.

"*Ce n'est pas ça petite gosse*," said Paul, "I love her

no longer. I love you—you only. But she knows I am not married: that you are not a Comtesse: that all our story is made up. She'll make a scene and we'll have to leave. It will be damned unpleasant. If it hadn't been for Pugh's clumsiness in upsetting Lady Cantire's work-basket the whole thing would have come out then and there on the terrace."

"The dear Pugh!" murmured Yvonne with fervour.

"Umph!" grunted Paul, "well, anyhow, it was lucky for us that he made a fool of himself, or we'd be in the soup by now. I've been trying to get hold of Monica all day to find out how we stand, but I can't get her alone. I wonder she hasn't told already: it will be all out to-morrow, anyway."

"Does she love you?"

"Considering she gave me the chuck and told me to go to the devil," began Paul, bitterly.

"To go to the devil?"

"Which means you, and a very pretty devil, too, I should say she doesn't."

"*Chéri, écoute.* If she meant to speak, she would have spoken before now: if she loves you, and I think she does, she will talk with you alone, to-morrow. I know," and Yvonne nodded her golden head wisely at Paul, "I know, she will try and take you from me, and if you will not be saved, she will go away and she will say nothing."

"I don't know," muttered Paul. "Why did you drag me here, Yvonne? We'll be found out sooner or later. For God's sake, let us go back to Monte Carlo or somewhere where it doesn't matter who and what we are."

But Yvonne would have none of it.

"Now I am *du monde*: why not? Am I not rich? Thanks, dear Paul, to you. And so you must be the

husband, the happy husband, of the Comtesse de Niverseine. I do not go back to Monte Carlo to be *demi-monde* again: to be *une femme entretenue*: to be familiar with the *maître d'hôtel* and to be followed by *Messieurs les m——* and to be pointed at by the English. *Mais non, je suis du monde, vraiment: j'y reste."*

Paul paced the terrace on the following morning, restlessly, awaiting a chance of seeing Monica alone. He had let Kingston-Pugh carry off Yvonne on some excuse or other, which he hardly heard, and now, except for Lady Cantire, who was in the nature of a fixture to her chair and work-basket, he was alone on the terrace. If Monica would only come out of the hotel, he could easily talk with her alone. For an hour he haunted the terrace and, at last, in despair, questioned Lady Cantire as to whether or not she had seen Monica that morning.

"I have not seen her this morning yet, Mr. Fennimore," said the old lady, "no doubt she is tired after her journey of yesterday and is still in her room."

But Fitton had another suggestion to make.

"I beg your pardon, milady, but Miss Van't Hoff has been out of her room an hour or more. I was talking to Miss Thompson (that's her maid, milady) before I came out of the house."

"Do you know where she's gone?" broke in Paul.

"Miss Thompson thought she was going down to the harbour, sir," said Fitton.

Paul made his excuses to Lady Cantire and hurried away.

The harbour of the Ile de l'Escape is a simple affair made up of a rock reef on the right hand, a stone jetty, bent to an obtuse angle in the middle, and between

them a strip of sand, half a mile in length. On the rising ground at the head of the jetty, are clustered a number of mean houses, fishermen's dwellings, for the most part tumbling into decay. A few fishing-boats lie upon the upper beach near the jetty. The low stone wall along the outer edge of the jetty is commonly draped with fishing nets. The reef of rock runs out half a mile or more beyond the end of the jetty, thus completely sheltering the harbour, the waters of which are freely besprinkled with the cork floats of lobster pots and the like, which cause annoyance to incoming craft. But the traffic of the port of the Ile de l'Escape is small.

As Paul followed the crooked pathway down to the harbour and came in sight of the jetty, he saw a figure in a green jumper and a white skirt alone on the quay, which he knew at once to be Monica. He slackened his pace, almost unconsciously, as he came up to the jetty, the difficulties of speech becoming more apparent to him the nearer he came to Monica, and when, at last, he stood before her, he was quite at a loss for words. But Monica spared him any trouble in beginning.

"Paul," she said, holding out her hands towards him with an appealing gesture, "I've been a brute . . . I didn't mean. . . . All this is my fault; forgive me."

"Forgive you for what?" asked Paul, and he laughed, and the accent of bitterness in the laugh was really admirably done.

Monica Van't Hoff did not look at Paul. She leaned upon the stone wall of the jetty with her back towards him and stared out to sea.

"I said more—more, perhaps, than I meant: I was harsh: I did not mean to be harsh, to be cruel, to hurt

you. I had no thought that you would take me at my word. I said . . . you know what I said. I am sorry—Paul: I am very, very sorry. I did not mean—I swear that I did not think—that you would—would take it so hardly—as to . . .”

“To go to the dogs?” suggested Paul.

“Yes,” said Monica, in a whisper.

“To the female dogs,” added Paul, with a grim laugh, still more admirably done, “but she is a pretty female dog, is she not? of the rarest and most costly breed.”

“Paul,” said Monica, humbly. “I know I am to blame, but I did not wish to drive you to this. You—you must leave this woman.”

“Perhaps,” replied Paul, drily, “you may have noticed that she is very beautiful, more beautiful than—the run of women. She seems not unfond of me. Of her moral worth, doubtless, I am unfitted to speak, but . . .”

“But, Paul, you must leave her, you cannot . . .”

“The Comtesse de Niverseine and her husband cannot stay here if you choose to tell all the world who they are. A generous action, truly, on your part, who . . .”

Monica swung round from the wall on which she had been leaning and faced Paul. There was a high colour in her cheeks and a light in her eyes, so that even Paul, who had risen from the bed of Helen, was moved to grant her a claim to beauty.

“Paul,” she said, slowly, “you do me less than justice. I have no interest in such *amours*, either to cloak or uncloak them. I am not a policeman. Social impostors in a hotel merely amuse me. I don’t stoop to expose them. Paul, you must leave this woman for

another reason. I said just now that I said more than I meant that day in the woods of la Calotterie; but more than that, I did not mean what I said. I said I did not love you. I was mistaken."

Paul walked to the sea wall and, resting his elbows upon it, buried his face in his hands. When, nearly a minute later, he raised his face from them, there were signs of tears in his eyes and when he spoke his voice was hoarse with pain.

"It is too late, Monica, too late. I cannot play fast and loose. I cannot blow hot and cold in an hour. You cannot take back that which you have thrown away. You cannot mend what is broken. You cannot bring to life again what you have killed. I could have once loved you, Monica, but now—at least, I can play the game to the finish."

Paul sank his face, once again, in his hands.

"Paul," cried Monica, "oh, Paul . . ." but her words were not finished, for there was a sound of footsteps on the jetty and a moment later Yvonne and Kingston-Pugh joined Monica and Paul.

"Hullo," cried Paul, "come down for the launch?"

"No," said Pugh. "Welcome the new arrivals. Look, there she is coming round the point now; we saw her making for the island from the top and we came down to see who they are."

As they stood and watched, a small steam yacht, painted white with a yellow funnel, came into sight round the rocks. She steamed slowly up the harbour and dropped her anchor about a hundred yards from the quay. Her name was not readable at that distance away, but she flew the French flag at her stern. Yvonne was staring wide-eyed at the yacht.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" she muttered, "but it looks like

the *Atalante*: and if it's the *Atalante* it will be Aurillacq."

A boat had put off from the yacht. As it drew near to the jetty, it could be seen that, besides the crew, a fat man in a panama hat sat in the stern.

"It is Aurillacq," said Yvonne, with a shrug of her shoulders.

A few minutes later the man in the panama stood on the jetty. He was a short man of some forty odd years of age, inclined to grossness, and clad in a white duck suit with large, silver buttons. His hands were fat, his fingers short and podgy and heavy with rings. His face was round like an orange, his eyes small and black, his nose short, his lips thick and his chin double. His upper lip carried a small black moustache ending in a short horizontal spike on either side of his nose. His cheek and chin had been clean shaven twenty-four hours earlier.

He walked towards the group on the jetty with a quick, strutting gait, which advertised the sense of his own importance and worth in the world. The four watched him in silence. Kingston-Pugh sat on the seawall, swinging his legs idly, and Monica leant against the wall beside him. Paul and Yvonne stood a few paces away and Yvonne slipped her arm through Paul's as the newcomer came up to them. He lifted his hat formally to Paul and said, in reputable English:

"If Monsieur will be so kind to let me speak with Madame alone a moment?"

Had Yvonne's arm not been linked in his, Paul would surely have acceded to this request: indeed, he was about to speak in this sense, when Yvonne forestalled him.

"What concerns me concerns my husband, Monsieur," said Yvonne, in French.

The fat man in the panama hat shrugged his shoulders eloquently, and answered in French:

"That is as you wish: Germaine, you will kindly pay to me my half of your winnings. That was the agreement. However, I will be content with 100,000 francs. I am not difficult: it is generous, that."

Yvonne threw back her head and laughed.

"Is he mad or merely drunk?"

Kingston-Pugh slipped down from the sea-wall and raised his hat half an inch from his head in a very frigid manner.

"May I ask," he said, coldly, "to whom we have the honour of speaking?"

"I am the Comte d'Aurillacq: Germaine knows very well . . ."

"Monsieur le Comte d'Aurillacq," broke in Kingston-Pugh, grandly, "is mistaken. I have the honour to present him to the Comtesse de Niverseine and to her husband, Mr. Fennimore."

"Comtesse de Niverseine!" broke in Aurillacq, angrily, "Countess of Nowhere! I know this woman well: she is a nobody. I lent her five thousand francs to play with at Monte Carlo. If she loses, *ça ne fait rien*, but if she wins, she will pay me half of what she has won: that was the agreement; and now she has—how you say it?—bust the bank and run away without paying me my money. I learn she has come here with an Englishman and I follow her. *C'est une affaire . . .*"

"La Comtesse . . .," began Pugh.

"Bah! *Elle n'est pas Comtesse. Elle était ma maîtresse. Nom d'un chien, elle n'est qu'une grue.*

Peste! et voleuse, aussi: il y'en a cent mille francs . . ."

But Paul had shaken himself free from Yvonne and, before Aurillacq could say more, had smacked him soundly across the cheek.

"Liar!"

The Comte d'Aurillacq staggered back a few paces. His hat had fallen off. His bald head gleamed whitely in the sunlight. He rubbed his cheek tenderly with his hand. He seemed too astonished even to resent the physical attack. Paul stood before him, pale with anger, his lips parted, his hand clenched.

"You can use a pistol, I suppose, Monsieur?"

"A pistol? *Pourquoi?*" muttered the Count.

"Damn! Am I to call you coward as well as liar. If you won't fight . . ."

"Fight? A duel? Because of Germaine here? To fight with the pistol *pour une femme comme ça: une grue—une p——! Nom de Dieu, c'est idiot!*"

"No, Monsieur, you need not fight if you are a coward and prefer to be horsewhipped in public."

"Oh, fine, fine!" murmured Kingston-Pugh, involuntarily.

The Count bowed.

"Monsieur leaves me no choice," he said, coldly.

"If he has a friend who will . . ."

"Pugh . . ." began Paul.

"Charmed, Fennimore, charmed to act for you," and Kingston-Pugh turned to the Count. "At what time . . . ?"

"Le Capitaine Janeaux will call upon you this afternoon at the hotel and make the arrangements," said the Count.

He bowed stiffly, turned and walked back to the steps at the end of the jetty.

Paul swore under his breath and, breaking away from Yvonne, who had placed her arm over his shoulder, strode moodily away.

"I say, never been in a duel before," said Pugh to Yvonne. "No end of a lark."

Yvonne laughed happily.

"Oh, the dear Paul—*il est charmant*."

Monica walked up to the hotel by herself.

CHAPTER XI: A DUEL A LA MODE

CAPTAIN JANEUX, of the steam yacht *Atalante*, walked with Kingston-Pugh on the lower terrace in the gardens of the Château Falaise. He was a small, dark, agile, little man, with a neat, pointed, black beard and small, bright eyes. He seemed ill at ease, as though he did not relish the business upon which he was bent, nor did his unhappiness seem to be due only to his English, which tongue, as he told Kingston-Pugh, he "speaked ver' bad."

They had twice paced the length of the terrace before Captain Janeaux left the formal preamble to come to the more practical details of the affair.

"Monsieur le Comte d'Aurillacq," he began at last, "he told me speak you that he know he spoke too quick this morning. He will say to Monsieur 'e is ver' sorry. 'E will make apology, *si on peut arranger wiv' not a fight? Alors*," and Captain Janeaux spread out his hands and shrugged his shoulders with all the air of a man who has performed, willy-nilly, an unpleasant duty, and would advise you of his own helplessness in the affair. Kingston-Pugh felt sorry for the little captain, who showed such small delight in being messenger to so craven a spirit.

"Captain Janeaux," he said, severely, "I am instructed to say, on behalf of my principal, that he can accept no apology from Monsieur le Comte d'Aurillacq. The insult was too gross to allow of any apology. My principal insists upon Monsieur le Comte meeting him

unless he prefers—you must forgive me, Monsieur, for I can but repeat the very words of my principal—unless he prefers to be thrashed in public.”

Captain Janeaux’s expression brightened. He was plainly glad to have rid himself of the apology and still to preserve the hope of a duel.

“*Alors, Monsieur,*” he said, brightly, “it is now only to arrange ze place and ze time—and ze pistols and ze oder tings.”

“Good. For the place, I suggest the small beach to the left of the harbour. It is a deserted place and hidden from view by the cliffs on either side. There is a pathway down to it from the top of the cliff, which I can show you. It is an ideal place for an affair like this. As for the time, shall we say noon to-morrow? At that time, the sun will be high up in the sky and not shining in the eyes of either of the principals, and the light will be excellent.”

“*Bien, Monsieur,*” murmured Captain Janeaux, “*ça va bien. Et les pistolets, vous en avez?*”

Kingston-Pugh walked over to a chair on which was a leather dispatch case. This he opened and, taking out a couple of army revolvers, he handed one to the Captain.

“A little heavy for duelling, perhaps,” he murmured, “but very effective weapons. Our Army pattern, you know: .45 calibre.”

Captain Janeaux handled the heavy revolver a little doubtfully.

“Zey are ze pistols to kill,” he murmured.

“That is the object that my principal has in view,” replied Kingston-Pugh, grimly.

“*Sacré Dieu,* but if ’e is killed, there is ze law.”

“*Monsieur le Comte d’Aurillacq,*” said Kingston-

Pugh, with a grand air, "should have thought of this before he spoke as he did to Madame."

The Captain pushed up the peak of his cap and wiped his forehead with a yellow silk handkerchief. He muttered something in French about d'Aurillacq into his beard.

"In the event of Monsieur le Comte falling," continued Kingston-Pugh, gravely, "which is not unlikely, as Mr. Fennimore is said to be the best pistol shot outside the Army, you will, of course, make no report to the authorities for, say, twenty-four hours, so as to give time for my principal and myself to leave the country."

"*Mais, certainement,*" murmured Janeaux, absently. "You say Monsieur Fennimore is—*comme vous dites?*—a crack shot?"

"He is said to be the third best shot in England, but Monsieur le Comte is no doubt used to the pistol also?"

"*Oh, mais oui, oui,*" said Captain Janeaux, hastily, and, after expressing himself fully satisfied with the arrangements and the usual formal phrases of leave-taking, he turned and walked away. Kingston-Pugh walked by himself for some minutes, seemingly deep in thought.

"Now for Paul," he muttered, at last, as he climbed the steps leading up from the terrace.

He found Paul in a deck chair in a shady corner of the big terrace. He was making an early afternoon tea off a large gin and ginger ale with ice in it and a succession of Turkish cigarettes. He was alone and in an ill temper. Pugh dropped into an empty wicker chair beside Paul.

"Have a drink?" said Paul, grumpily.

"Don't mind if I do. I've been talking with Janeaux—d'Aurillacq's second, you know. It's dry work, talkin'."

Paul made a noise which was half way between a grunt and groan, equally compounded of disgust and despair. He leant over towards the small enamelled iron table and struck the brass bell upon it.

"Some fellow, the Count, what?" said Kingston-Pugh, vaguely.

"Fat bounder," growled Paul.

He lit another cigarette at the stump of the one he had just finished.

"Regular fire-eater," continued Kingston-Pugh.

"Struck me as being a coward as well as a — of the first water," said Paul, using a word which, however applicable to the Comte d'Aurillacq, cannot be reported, and should not have been used by Paul. "I wish to God that . . ."

"Hush!" broke in Pugh, "here's the waiter."

"What's yours?"

"Same as yours—gin and ginger ale—looks cool."

Paul emptied half of his glass at a gulp.

"Two large gin and ginger ales," he said to the waiter. "What have you got in that bag?" asked Paul, when the waiter had gone. "Samples?"

"The pistols."

"Good God! What the devil . . ." he broke off, as the waiter came towards them with the drinks. "By the way, where's Yvonne? She's not been near me this afternoon. I thought she was with you."

"She's gone off somewhere with Paterson," said Kingston-Pugh.

"Ugh! With that fellow! Well, here's luck!"

Paul drank deeply. Pugh sipped at the cool con-

coction and, putting his glass back upon the table, reached down for the dispatch case. He placed the case on his knees and threw back the lid.

"Janeaux was delighted with these, and we've fixed the time for noon to-morrow, on the beach behind the harbour—you know, the one below the Camel Rock."

Paul stared goggle-eyed at the revolvers.

"God in Heaven, man, we can't fight with those—it's bloody murder! Besides, d'Aurillacq won't understand 'em. Hasn't he got any duelling pistols?"

"Can't be helped. He hasn't got any pistols with him. But you needn't worry: that will be all right. It's lucky I've got these—they're Boomer's, as a matter of fact—and d'Aurillacq is quite satisfied with 'em. He's all out for blood, and any pistol is much the same to him. I'm told he's the best pistol-shot in France. When he was in the Chasseurs, they said . . ."

"You're mad," cried Paul, wildly, "mad as a March hare. It's not a duel, it's murder; and the one who isn't murdered will be hung!"

"That's all right, old chap. I've arranged everything. If you do in d'Aurillacq, you'll have twenty-four hours to get away in: you've got the launch and can pop across to Port St. Simon and be in Spain in a few hours. Besides, you're a bit of a hand with the barkers, aren't you? If you don't want to kill your man, you can wing 'im."

Paul gulped down the remainder of his drink.

"And supposing he kills me?" he groaned.

"Well, you know, you can't go and slap French noblemen on the cheek for nothing. Besides, these crack shots are often no use at all in a duel."

But Paul would not be comforted. He lay huddled up in his deck chair and stared with unseeing eyes at

the gay flowerbeds and the stones of the terrace. He made no effort to talk to Pugh, who presently rose and left him with a reminder that the hour was noon on the morrow.

"Oh, curse you!" he growled, as Pugh turned away. But a smile hung upon the lips of Kingston-Pugh, and his step was light, and the responsibility that commonly lies heavily upon the shoulders of seconds in affairs of honour seemed to trouble him not at all.

Of the six on the island who had part in or knew of the duel to take place on the morrow, only two slept easily that night, Kingston-Pugh, who had arranged, and Yvonne, who was the cause of the affair. Yvonne, indeed, was hugely delighted with the whole business. Never before had any man fought for her; never before had her honour been held so highly that a man's life might hang upon it. Never since she had done with the half and entered into the whole, had she realised so fully what it meant to be truly of the world. She was in the highest humour all that afternoon and evening, even to the extent of waking John Paterson out of his coldness and reserve and keeping him with her for an hour in the afternoon whilst Paul gave way to gin and despair; and she was more tender to Paul that evening than she had ever been, though even her rare beauty and her practised art, and the champagne which he drank at dinner and the many drinks afterwards, failed to minister to his peace of mind or lighten his gloom. Yvonne's praise of his high courage: her kisses on his lips: her arms about him: her picture of the Count fleeing the island on the morrow with a bullet in his arm and a broken spirit, brought him no cheer. He lay awake long after Yvonne was peacefully asleep, watching the stars drift slowly across the square

of the window, with bitterness in his heart against all the world, and with a deeper bitterness, which was almost common hate, against Yvonne and the beauty of Yvonne that had brought him to this pass. He cursed himself again and again for the fool that he had been on the quay that morning, for this giving way to so childish a sense of the dramatic as to challenge the Count to a duel, a challenge which he fondly believed at the time the Comte d'Aurillacq would never have accepted. It is true that Yvonne had no knowledge of the Count's prowess with the pistol; but her relationship with him seemed to have been comparatively brief and, beyond expressing a surprise (and delight) that the Count was ready to fight at all, she brought little solace to Paul. When at last he fell asleep, it was but to stand as target to marksmen through successive nightmares.

Monica slept even less easily than Paul, for a conscience that had insisted on laying at her door Paul's moral and material downfall now questioned her as to his chance of death also. It is true that she doubted both the courage and the ability of the Comte d'Aurillacq in a duel, for Kingston-Pugh had not entertained her with his history, nor had she seen the pistols. But untoward happenings have occurred even in the most formal and best organised of duels, and fear and pity and remorse played shuttlecock with her through the night.

As for the Comte d'Aurillacq, he cursed his Captain volubly for his gross mismanagement of the affair on his return from meeting Kingston-Pugh, and he left him that night, after a most unpleasant interview, with definite orders to carry out, which made Captain

Janeaux to sleep even more uneasily than did his owner.

The day dawned on the morrow in splendour as on other days, and the sun climbed up into a blue sky without a stain of cloud. Paul breakfasted, sullenly, in silence, and afterwards went out to bathe by himself, leaving Yvonne still a-bed. He told her, with a grim humour, that he might as well die clean. She had laughed gaily at him, and Paul thought her uncommonly heartless as he flung himself out of the room.

But Paul was not altogether just to Yvonne. She was not so heartless as he supposed. She had no mind to allow blood to be shed. Even if she had no gratitude to or pity in her heart for Paul, to let him be shot or to shoot the Count in a duel, might be uncommonly inconvenient to her, and, at the very least, must end her stay at the Château Falaise. Had Paul been less concerned with his own part in the affair, he must have suspected her readiness to accept so much. Yvonne, indeed, had a plan well formed in her mind. She knew from Paul the hour and place of the action, and she purposed to break in upon the actors at the last moment and stop the duel. A tragic ending would thus be avoided, her own love of the melodramatic would be amply satisfied: the Count would be forced to leave the island, and she would appear in the fascinating part of the loving wife who will accept any insult rather than let hurt or danger come to her husband. Properly managed the scene might be a quite touching one, and she had it in mind to impress John Paterson, whom she knew to be a man of integrity and of a kind heart, into the business of stopping the fight.

By eleven o'clock Paul had not yet returned from his

bathe, or he might have met Pugh who was already on his way to the beach. Yvonne set off in search of Paterson.

The particular beach which Kingston-Pugh had chosen for the duel was a place admirably suited for such a purpose. The little patch of sand lay in a semi-circle at the foot of the cliffs and was hidden from view except to anyone standing on the cliff's edge or from the sea. The stretch of sand was very smooth, about a hundred yards across and fifty yards deep. The cliffs rose sheer in most places, but the rock was more broken on the west side and down this part of the cliff ran a zig-zig path. Towards the centre of the beach, and about a dozen yards from the cliff base, lay a round flat rock. At the exact hour of noon a solitary figure sat upon this rock, smoking a cigarette. At his feet on the sand lay a square leather dispatch case. He smoked his cigarette and gazed dreamily out to sea. He did not turn his head until Yvonne and John Paterson stood beside him.

"Where are the others? Where is the Count?" asked Paterson. "I understood there was a duel . . ."

Kingston-Pugh pointed out to sea. Some three miles away a slim, white hull gleamed upon the blue water.

"There is the Count," he said quietly.

"*Ah! le poltron!*" laughed Yvonne. "*J'l'ai cru.* But where is Paul?"

Pugh pointed more towards the east.

"There."

A small motor launch was just visible, making for the French coast.

"*O! le brave Paul!*" cried Yvonne, clapping her hands. "*O le brave homme!* He follows Aurillacq and

makes him to fight in Port St. Simon," and, running down to the water's edge, she waved a tiny, lace handkerchief at the distant launch.

John Paterson looked keenly at Kingston-Pugh.

"He did not start from the harbour? I saw the launch at the other side of the island, off the bathing pool, an hour ago. It must have picked him up there?"

Kingston-Pugh nodded.

"He did not know that the Count had gone?"

"No."

"Does she believe he's followed the man to fight him?" asked Paterson, nodding his head towards Yvonne.

Pugh gazed at the rapturous figure at the sea's edge. She looked wonderfully bewitching in the bright sunshine, with all her hair a-flame and one slender arm held out above her head seawards.

"No," he said, after a moment's silence.

"She is not his wife?"

"No."

"It is a funny world," said Paterson, with something of a sigh.

"A very funny world," agreed the other.

"You find it so, too?"

"I find it funny in a different way," said Kingston-Pugh, as Yvonne turned and came towards them.

CHAPTER XII: BLIND GOD OF LOVE

IF Lady Cantire had welcomed the coming of the Comtesse de Niverseine to the Château Falaise as a relief to monotony; if her beauty and her wit had pleased the old lady more than she could have thought possible; this affair of honour and its ending delighted her beyond measure. She sat, with her crochet work untouched in her lap, and listened to Yvonne's account of the matter with the deepest interest. She learnt how the Count, an ill-mannered fellow, a barbarian, and a one-time suitor for the hand of the Comtesse, had displayed his bad manners to the Comtesse in her husband's presence on his arrival the day before. The sudden blow, the challenge to fight and the threat of the horse-whip, lost nothing in the telling, and the ending of the tale in which the Count, as craven in spirit as bankrupt in manners, had fled the island to be followed by the husband in a motor-launch, was a most delightful conclusion to the affair. Not for very many years had Lady Cantire been so intrigued by passing events; not for a long time had her love of the dramatic and bizarre been so amply satisfied. Not since her uncle, old Lord Flackarmah, had discovered the well known painter, Joseph Bunt, painting Lady Flackarmah from the nude and had thrown him through his own studio skylight, had she been so thrilled by the affairs of other people.

"I hope Mr. Fennimore will find the Count in Port

St. Simon and make him fight," said Lady Cantire, with vigour, "and I hope he shoots him."

"But the law," complained Yvonne, "the law—she is not just; if Paul kills d'Aurillacq, we must go away from France. The law, *vraiment, c'est bête*."

"That is the worst of a republic," replied Lady Cantire, primly. "You should have a king. But it is the same with us. But what can one do nowadays? We are democratic, and a man is not allowed to defend his own honour. That is called freedom."

But if Lady Cantire was as delighted in hearing of the affair as was Yvonne in the telling of it, to one, at least, the thought of it brought but misery. Monica, who had joined Lady Cantire while Yvonne retailed the event, heard the story to the end in silence. She stood, dejectedly, for some little while, gazing seawards toward Port St. Simon.

"Paul has followed the Count to fight him in France?" she said, at last.

Yvonne nodded her head.

"*Oui, le brave petit homme*—and he will kill him—he will kill him unless he run away," she cried, laughing gaily.

Monica stamped her foot upon the stone flags of the terrace and her face flushed angrily.

"Oh, but you are heartless, heartless!" she cried. "You, Lady V., should, at least, know better. He must be stopped."

She turned and hurried away.

Lady Cantire held her lorgnette to her eyes and gazed after the retreating figure of Monica, whose very back looked angry.

"I do not understand the new generation," said Lady Cantire, with disapproval in her voice, "there is no

need for this display of—er—gratuitous emotion. Considering Mr. Fennimore is your husband, I think—I think, my dear Countess” (and Lady Cantire shut her lorgnette with a snap as though thus closing the subject), “that her solicitude is misplaced.”

The Port St. Simon is of some size and of more importance in the Mediterranean trade; but although it is a town of many small hotels and large and noisy cafés, there is only one hotel to which anybody who is anybody goes. This is the Regence. It is a large, white building, with a broad balcony and a terraced garden, a mile or so from the centre of the town, on the sea coast, overlooking the bay of St. Simon.

The hotel has a large, long dining-room, which opens on two sides to a broad balcony above the sea. In summer time one dines on this balcony, *en plein air*, and the inner room is empty save for the orchestra, service tables and the rostrum of the cashier.

Monica Van't Hoff came down to dinner about eight o'clock, even more angry and more sick at heart (the which is the most uncomfortable combination imaginable) than when she had left Lady Cantire that morning. The waiter led her to a table outside, at the extreme end of the south balcony. The balcony was continued again along the west side of the house, but the tables on this side were hidden from her view by the angle of the wall. She had hardly sat down and given her order to the waiter, when she heard a remembered voice from around the corner. It was the voice of Paul, who seemed to be finishing a story of that particular kind which is told in too loud a voice after too much champagne. The teller of the tale remembered, now and again, to lower his voice, so that,

fortunately, Monica did not hear all the story, and the replies of Paul's companion on the other side of the table were indistinct. When the waiter brought her the *filet de sole* she asked who these two were.

"Eet is Monsieur le Comte d'Aurillacq, wit a English gentleman," murmured the waiter, in her ear, very ready to announce a nobleman as a patron of the house.

Presently, the story having been concluded in a lower tone, Monica heard Paul begin to talk more reputably in an ordinary voice. She did not hear clearly what the Count said, but Paul's answer was painfully distinct.

"Oh, that's all right. You have made a handsome apology, *mon vieux* (Paul had put away more than half a bottle of *Piper*). It was a misunderstanding—an unfortunate misunderstanding. I lent Yvonne the money on which she won—on which she broke the bank—she'd lost all yours before I picked her up. Naturally, she's grateful. Of course, as you're not going to butt in, it's all right; we're good friends. You see, she *would* come here and do the society stunt. It's damned awkward at times."

The Count murmured something sympathetic, which was inaudible.

"Bit difficult at times," continued Paul. "You see, there's a girl who was running after me when I was at G.H.Q. Well, she turns up, and if it hadn't been for a bit of diplomacy on my part, we'd have been in the soup, you know; and then you butted in . . . but, anyway, that's all right."

Again the Count's reply was inaudible.

"But if you turn up again, you know, damme, I'll put a bullet into you. *Garçon, encore un Piper!*"

Monica Van't Hoff beckoned to her waiter.

"I'll change my table," she said in French, and in a low voice, "I have heard enough."

"Pardon, Madame?"

"Il faut changer ma place."

That evening the Direction gave her the information she required as to the Paris train. It left at 10.36 on the morrow. The Direction regretted that her stay at the Regence had been so brief.

* * * * *

While Paul was drinking champagne with the Count d'Aurillacq on the balcony of the Hotel Regence, Yvonne sat alone at her table in the great dining-room of the Château Falaise and ate mechanically the food that was put before her. She scarcely noticed that the *filet de sole* was of a kind of which she was especially fond; or that the *soufflé* was an old favourite; and she sipped at the Montrachet, in a listless manner, as though it had been but an ordinary wine of last year and not a vintage of '08. Even the waiter, who served her, marked a manner so foreign to her common habit. Had she had the ordering of the dinner and the choice of wines herself, she might well this night have commanded an *escallope de veau* and a *demi-Barsac*, without thought of wine list or the bill of fare. Annette, also, found her mistress in a strange mood, and dressed her that evening for dinner with a despatch, which was as pleasant to the dresser as it was rare in its happening. Commonly, the business took a full hour, and by the time Yvonne was ready to walk out of her room and down the broad staircase, the floor was littered with silks and lace, the bed and every chair was burdened with frocks that had been tried and found wanting, and Paul, if he had the patience to remain

in the room, was reduced to oaths and Annette to tears. But, on this night, there was no Paul to be in the way in the room and to declaim against the ways of women and of Yvonne, and upon the long lashes of Annette there quivered not one solitary tear. The chairs had been empty, save for the clothes taken off, and the bed bare, but for the frock to be put on, and on the dark carpet there lay not so much as a stocking or a handkerchief, a shirt, a garter, or a glove.

Annette had laid out the silver cloth by Kobski, and it lay there longwise on the white quilt, gleaming luminously in the lamplight, like a slender fish above the sea-foam under a tropic moon.

"Madame will wear this?" Annette had asked, without any hope that Yvonne would agree. But Yvonne had only nodded with not a glance bed-ward, and had allowed herself to be undressed and dressed again without a word, as a child will who is anxious only to get the business over and to be downstairs again. She had no complaint against wearing this frock: no wish to attempt any other: no demand to be undressed again when once dressed and dissatisfied before the mirror: no criticism of Annette's handling of the affair. She was dressed that night and ready to go down to dinner in a record time, and instead of being the last to enter the room and under the eyes of all, she was the first to sit down, unseen of any but the waiters.

For Yvonne that night was as she had not been for many years. She was full of thought: careless, unconscious almost, of material things: heedless of what she ate and of what she drank and of how she had clothed herself. She had won, successfully, to a world from half a world; she was not aware, perhaps, how truly she had conquered this world, in so far that she had, even, been conquered by it, and had now caught the

contagion from those who inherit the world. Where money has no value, the things which money buys have no value, since what is always to hand is quickly forgotten or despised. When one once has all the bread that one can eat one can no longer live by bread alone. This process of detachment was an unconscious one. No such thought as this—of the value of bread, for example—was in her mind. She had no notion of how far she had come along an unfamiliar path. All she did, at the moment, was to think of Paul: to think of Paul with impatience: to compare Paul, in his disfavour, with an image in the mind. It was a beginning, of which she was innocent, of an end, the which she could never have foreseen. She but ate her dinner without noticing what dishes were brought to her, or even when they were taken away: without tasting the wine she drank: without thinking of how her frock hung upon her and how well it showed her arms and shoulders: without ever seeing that Major Boomer was looking at her, so hungrily, that he, too, scarcely did common justice to the cook.

She began to think of Paul from another viewpoint: not in the first instance, as a provider of bread, as a potential bringer of good things: not, in the second instance, as a man, muscular, virile, with a smooth skin, soft hair and large eyes: not, in the third instance, in gratitude for a benefit received, but of him, worthily, as her lover; and from this point of view he was now weighed and was found wanting. The flight to France, particularly, stuck in her gullet; she had no illusion that he was in chase after d'Aurillacq, as was given out officially to the hotel. She had no habit in self-deception: the realities of life had always been too clear to her for any such exercise. He had fled

because he was afraid—not knowing that the Count had fled also. He was a poltroon.

She became a critic to Paul; and, since it is the nature of the critic to compare one with another rather than to refer to any absolute standard or to judge by rule and canon, she began to compare Paul to others on the island: to compare him with Kingston-Pugh and with John Paterson and even with Hooper and Boomer. She began to think, not a little oddly, more of Paterson in relation to Paul than of Kingston-Pugh, although Kenneth was without doubt the handsomest man on the island. But Paul was the next best-looking, and it may have been that some unconscious distrust of beauty had grown up in the mind of Yvonne, so that too fair a body might be thought to house too poor a spirit, whilst irregularity in feature and a grossness in form might be witnesses to a good courage. It may have been some such logic as this: it may have been that since Paterson was the only man on the island who did not wait upon her, he was so appraised of more worth—for it is in nature to esteem those who reject us: it may have been that, since his part with her to stop the duel, he was more in her mind, but it was in comparison to John Paterson rather than in comparison to any other that Paul failed to qualify in retrospect.

Yvonne finished her dinner in such a mind and afterwards sat in the lounge and drank coffee with Lady Cantire. But she sipped at her coffee in silence and let Lady Cantire do all the talking; which pleased the old lady very well, for the affair of the duel and its ending had awakened in the mind of Lady Cantire memories of past scandal, and she was garrulously reminiscent. Yvonne was just present enough to mur-

mur "Yes" and "*Vraiment*," and to make the right noises in suitable places, so that Lady Cantire thought she had never found so appreciative a listener and became more than ever in love with Yvonne. There is nothing so highly valued by Age as the ear of Youth.

But at last Yvonne made her excuses: she would go out into the garden and enjoy loneliness and the night. She rang the bell and asked for her maid and cloak.

"The night, it is so lovely: it is wrong to be indoors," she murmured. Yesterday, she would have used the occasion to say that she was so anxious about Paul and that she would be alone to think of him. To-night she left Lady Cantire with but a vague apology and the "Good-night" of convention, and drifted down the lounge and out on to the terrace without a glance at any there or to see if she was followed. But her silence and her absent manner were, none the less, satisfactorily interpreted by Lady Cantire, who, walking across the room and joining the Vereker-Prynnes, said how *distracte* was the Countess, how anxious about her husband; and Adela Vereker-Prynne agreed that such conjugal fidelity was but too rare in these days of separation and divorce.

The moon hung high above the gardens: a semi-circle of silver in the black cupola of night, so that the Château itself threw but short, fore-shortened shadow and the terrace lay white in the moonlight. Yvonne leant upon the stone balustrade and looked towards France, now invisible but for a little cluster of points of light, like stars, which marked the Port St. Simon and the life of man. In the light of these terrestrial stars, men and women talked and walked, or talked and drank, sadly or gaily as their mood was: but Yvonne did not think of these; and there also the

Count drank and Monica went dry-eyed to bed, but Yvonne did not think of them; and there Paul laughed, but Yvonne had no thought of Paul. She gazed across the silver water and saw but one face, a face rugged to the verge of the grotesque, but set with two, big, blue eyes full of visions and crowned with a mop of upstanding hair. She leant upon the parapet under the moon and for the first time since she had played in the meadows as a child, was glad to be alone. Boomer had followed her out from the house, but his dismissal had been brief and cruel. He now talked with Kingston-Pugh, who had been too wise to risk rebuff, at the far end of the terrace by the myrtles.

Yvonne stayed thus, without speech or movement, for many minutes, whilst Boomer complained of his treatment at her hands to Pugh, and Pugh smoked his cigar unsympathetically, and the moon climbed perceptibly a few inches higher across the sky. But presently footsteps sounded on the stones and then stopped, as a dark figure stood in the middle of the terrace, halfway between Yvonne and Kingston-Pugh, and stared out into the night.

"Mr. Paterson," said Yvonne, in a low voice, half turning her head.

John Paterson started slightly, and then walked slowly towards her. He stood beside her, not looking at her, but out to sea. He waited for her to speak. She did not speak for some seconds, as she looked up at him with her chin resting in her hand.

"It is very lovely, is it not so?" she said at last, speaking in French.

"It is very lovely," agreed Paterson, speaking slowly, correctly, but with an English accent that Yvonne found very lovable.

"I have always been in love with the moon," said Yvonne, softly, "ever since I was a child in the Pyrénées, where the moon is more beautiful than anywhere else; especially in winter, when it sets upon the snow mountains."

"Yet people fear the moon and pull down their blinds to keep it out of the room," said Paterson.

But Yvonne stood up and threw out her arms in invitation to the sea and sky and cried:

"Oh, but I adore her!"

She dropped her arms to her side and turned to Paterson.

"Let us go down and walk on the lower terrace," she said, softly, and, without waiting for him to agree, she turned away and walked quickly towards the steps at the end of the terrace. Paterson followed her. Major Boomer, watching them disappear down the steps, swore under his breath.

"No chance for you to-night, my boy," said Kingston-Pugh, cheerfully.

Major Boomer swore above his breath.

Yvonne and John Paterson had the lower terrace to themselves. Twice they paced its length with but few words spoken until, on the third turn, Yvonne laid her hand lightly on Paterson's arm.

"Let us sit down, my friend; I am weary of walking."

In the middle of the lower terrace there was a wooden seat, painted white, set in an alcove cut into the bank. Yvonne sank down upon this seat and motioned Paterson to sit beside her.

The night was very still: no sounds from the terrace were to be heard in this quiet place: the faint echo of the sea-wash on the rocks and the song of grass-

hoppers alone came to the ears of the two upon the seat. So peaceful was this place that some spell of it seemed to have fallen upon Yvonne, for she was silent for more than a minute. She had flung her cloak open, for the night was warm, and she lay back and gazed into the dark sky. Her slender form, sheathed in silver, stood out against the patterned silk lining of her cloak as though she had been some silver fairy from a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *Titania* herself. Her small face, pale in the moonlight, was clear-cut out of the darkness like a cameo in ivory: her arms and hands shone, luminously, in the night. But John Paterson did not look at her; he gazed seaward and only turned his head when, at last, she spoke.

"Do you know why I brought you here?"

"Madame," said Paterson, speaking slowly, uncertainly, as though with effort, "I cannot—it would be impossible to guess why you should come . . . why you should seek the company of one as dull as myself."

"My friend," murmured Yvonne, "spare me your compliments, for I am serious. I would talk to you of myself."

"I listen."

"I would repeat to you a little story. Once upon a time there was a little girl who lived with her father in an old castle. I want you to picture to yourself this castle and the meadows among which it stood, and the little river that ran half way round it, and the road that ran past it, and the stretch of black pine wood that cloaked the hills behind. The castle was built in the shape of the letter L. A squat, square tower of grey stone, here and there yellowed with lichen, rose in the centre, and at each end there was a tall, round tower capped with a pointed roof, like an extinguisher

to a candle. The castle was very old—a former Niverseine had once entertained Louis XI. in it—and was of interest to antiquarians: the window above the door in the west wing and the details of the pillars in the small chapel—which stands beyond the west wing and on the very bank of the stream—are illustrated in standard works on architecture. Half a kilometre from the castle is the little village of Niverseine, a cluster of barns and cottages, with a couple of inns and a tiny church falling into decay.

“The road through Niverseine is but a by-road, leading from the small country town of Fronchas to nowhere, into the hills at the head of the Val de l’Abane and the few farms scattered among them. Few travellers pass by that road or come to Niverseine, and during my childhood in the old castle, I saw no one outside our own family save the village priest, the doctor from Fronchas and a rare visitor interested in antiquarian research. Company was not entertained at the Château Niverseine, for my father was that most to be pitied of all people, a man of birth but without money; a man as proud as he was poor. You must picture him as a grey, gaunt figure, long in the face, with piercing, deep-set eyes, a ragged beard, and long, restless hands: a man, morose, save when in his cups; bitter, disappointed. There were five of us children, my sister and three brothers. My mother died when I was six years old, and we grew up to hate and despise our father almost as fiercely as he did us. My brothers, who are all older than I am, soon left Niverseine: Raoul, the youngest, was killed at St. Quentin: Isidore is something indefinite in Indo-China, and of Charles I know nothing, even whether he is alive or dead. My sister was seduced by a forester and was

turned out of the castle by my father: she died in a hospital in Orleans a few years ago.

"I do not wish to weary you too much with a family history that is so unpleasant. I but want you to see the picture of this grim castle, solitary, outside a village of ruined farms and bankrupt farmers, inhabited by an aristocrat who could hardly find pennies to buy bread with, who had driven his sons from his door and one daughter to the streets, and now lived but in the hope of selling his youngest child (who had some claim to beauty) to the highest bidder."

Yvonne was silent for some seconds. Her companion still stared fixedly out across the moonlit water. Then she began to shudder, as if taken with an ague, although the night was warm.

"Paul bought me," she said, in a whisper.

Paterson murmured something unintelligible.

"I am glad my father died," continued Yvonne, in an even voice, "before he could enjoy the proceeds from the sale. It is little to be thankful for amid so much suffering; for, my friend, I suffer—how much I suffer cannot be measured. There are things—things that happen to me—things that cannot be told. I am alone, much alone. Dear friend, forgive me if I . . . if I . . . I should . . ."

With a break in her voice and a half stifled sob, Yvonne put out her hand and laid it on Paterson's, where it lay across his knee.

"Forgive me . . . that I should weary you with . . . with . . ."

Paterson took the slender hand in his and gently but deliberately put it back in Yvonne's lap.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a low voice, "you would more readily win my sympathy if you spoke the truth."

Yvonne stared a moment at Paterson, still as if cut out of marble; then she jumped up suddenly and, without any word spoken, ran up the path.

That night Yvonne lay awake and lonely in the middle of her large bed. She could not sleep. She heard the clock in the hall below strike hour after hour through the night, and she did what she had not done since a little wooden ball had, twice running, fallen into seventeen: she wept.

CHAPTER XIII: THE DUTY OF A FATHER

IT is a habit among the English to eat uncomfortably out of doors no matter how good be the fare provided and the service rendered within the house. The more unsuitable is the place chosen to feed in: the more difficult it is to come to: the further the food has to be carried, the more the English like it. This rite or ceremony of carrying away food and drink from the house and eating it solemnly in a hayfield, so that the hay gets into the butter; or on the seashore, so that the sand gets into the salad; or on too small a rock, so that the *Sauterne* falls into the sea, is called a picnic, a word said to be derived from "pick," to nibble at, and "nic" from "knack," a trifle of food. But since picnickers do not nibble, but gorge, their food, and as too much food is always carried out so as to give exercise to those who have to carry it back, a more likely derivation is from "pick-knack," or the knack to pick foreign objects, such as ants, flies, worms, grass, stones, sand, seaweed, shells, leaves and so forth, out of the food. But however this may be, the picnic is held in favour with the English and no Frenchman has ever been able to understand it.

It is, therefore, to be expected that the visitors at the Château Falaise, who were all English with the exception of Yvonne and the American, Hooper, should indulge in so English a pastime. There had been several of these excursions since Paul and Yvonne had come to the Ile de l'Escope, but it was generally held

that the acme in this art would be reached in the luncheon party that Kingston-Pugh was to give on Black Rock a few days after Paul's return from Port St. Simon.

It was thought that the picnic would be a picnic of picnics for more than one reason. That it was to be given by Kingston-Pugh, alone was surety for its success, for Pugh had a reputation in such matters. That Kingston-Pugh was a competent cricketer; that he could sit a horse: that his cutter, *No Trumps*, and his skill in it, were spoken of with respect in the bar parlours of Dovercourt: that he was a known player at Queen's Club: a plus four: an authority on *Auction*, goes without saying. These were but the appurtenances of his class. Much more than all this, he was unequalled in intimate and, what may be called, paper games. He had never been beaten in Clumps. In Tea-Pots he had no rival. He held the championship at Everything in the Kitchen beginning with K. He had caused more scandal in Consequences than any other player in the Home Counties. He had held the Sixpence for Up Jenkins several years running. In the art of picnicking he was known, or rather would have been known if Frenchmen ever picknicked, as *maitre*. And then the picnic was to take place on Black Rock, which, as it was the most uneasy place to reach in the island, being nearly wholly surrounded by water and only linked to the mainland by a neck of slippery and seaweed-covered rocks; as the rock itself sloped for the most part at a steep angle and was too small to hold comfortably the number of people asked to the luncheon, was, of itself, enough to assure the success of the picnic.

It is essential, in the true art of picnicking, that the

guests should arrive by different routes, so as to allow the maximum opportunity for someone to fail to find the place of the picnic or to arrive too late to eat of the lobster or whatever happens to be his favourite dish. So the guests to Kingston-Pugh's picnic were to come by two ways. The younger and more agile—Pugh himself and Boomer and Hooper, Paul and Paterson and Cecily and Lux—came overland, whilst Yvonne and Lady Cantire, Canon Fairmead and Dr. Hanson and the Vereker-Prynnes, together with the food, Fitton and Alphonse came from the hotel, by sea in the launch.

The way down from the top of the cliff to Black Rock is steep and difficult. Some sort of a path has been cut into the cliff's face by fishermen, but here and there the path has fallen into disrepair and there are ugly places to be passed over with the body pressed tightly against the rock face, the fingers clutching desperately into the rock crevice and the feet slipping uncomfortably on the sloping ledge. At the bottom of the cliff, a narrow procession of rounded stones, a hundred yards or so in length, leads out to the rock. These for the most part are draped in green and purple seaweeds, very slippery and deceiving, and conducive to wet feet and sprained ankles. The Rock itself rises some dozen feet above this causeway and is about ten yards across. It is, certainly, a picturesque and romantic spot. Great cliffs tower in a semicircle above it; the water around it is deep green or purple, here and there tinged to blue or olive-green where the seaweed grows near the surface. As combining the maximum of savage beauty with the maximum of material discomfort, no better place could be found for a picnic in the island.

The land party reached Black Rock first, Kingston-Pugh leading the way with Major Boomer, Paterson walking with Hooper, and Paul bringing up the rear with Cecily and Lux. Since Paul's return to the island Yvonne had shown towards him a coldness that puzzled almost as much as it angered him. He expected to return as a hero, having exacted a full and adequate apology from the timorous Count; as such, indeed, he was accepted by the hotel; and Lady Cantire, in particular, had been very effusive to him, and had bored him with a long account of how Sir Gerard Orpenthugh, when a young man, had tracked his wife's lover from Brighton to Bath and would undoubtedly have picked off his man had he not put to sea in a Jamaica sugar boat. The approval of Lady Cantire, however, was of small moment to Paul, and in no way compensated for the unkindness of Yvonne, who brutally refused to accept his own account of the affair or to believe that he had meant to fight at all: who called him coward: who kissed him but perfunctorily at his repeated instance: who took his kisses in marble coldness; and who behaved in all ways as though they were a couple many years married and about to seek legal relief as soon as the necessary evidence could be arranged.

So on this day of the picnic Paul walked with Cecily whilst Yvonne went in the launch with Lady Cantire, and being so cruelly treated by his mistress, began for the first time since he had come to the *Ile de l'Escape*, to see a beauty apart from that of Yvonne. He walked beside Cecily, whilst Lux pranced on in front of them, and admitted to himself that there was something compelling in her grey eyes, a softness in her voice, a beauty in the poise of her head, and grace

in her carriage: that her freshness, her happiness and her youth were worthy of possession. She was not Yvonne; but at least she had a charm of her own, and it was pleasant to walk and talk with her. He had, somehow, a strange feeling of having met her before, although he had no remembrance of her name and could recall no definite association. He talked easily with her of trivial matters, and when they came to the steep path down the cliff, he was very happy in helping her over the dangerous places. On the seaweed-covered stones in the neck out to Black Rock, he more than once saved her from slipping, and at Black Rock itself he first swung himself up on to the top of the Rock and, leaning down, grasped her hand and pulled her up to him with almost as much laughter and delight as had been his wont when doing the same for Yvonne a few days past.

Very soon after Pugh and his party had reached Black Rock, the launch arrived with Yvonne and Lady Cantire and the others. Hampers were hoisted up on to the Rock, and Alphonse and Fitton were soon busy in unpacking them and preparing the luncheon. A cloth was spread out upon the Rock, and a number of cushions arranged around it. Salmon and *mayonnaise* and salad, *pâté de foie gras* and cold meats, pastry and a sliced melon, a *macédoine* of fruit, cream and raspberries and strawberries, *Sauterne* in buckets of ice, jugs of claret cup, iced barley water for Lady Cantire, whisky for Boomer, and an army of plates and glasses and knives and forks and so forth began to appear from the capacious Hampers. There seemed every hope of the luncheon being a success—even a *succès fou*—and half an hour later, when all were seated round the tablecloth and the cup had been poured out and the

Sauterne opened and the salmon tasted, a picnic gaiety seized the company and even Paul forgot his injury at the hands of Yvonne, and Miss Adela Vereker-Prynn abandoned lemonade in favour of *Sauterne* and soda-water. Black Rock slopes downward and outward towards the sea, and at this end of the table, but a foot from the Rock's edge, sat Kingston-Pugh as host, with Lady Cantire on his right hand and Yvonne on his left. Boomer had sat down on the other side of Yvonne. Canon Fairmead was next to Lady Cantire, and then Adela Vereker-Prynn, and then Dr. Hanson. Paul and Cecily, Hooper and the elder Vereker-Prynn and John Paterson completed the other half of the table.

The picnic was a success from its very beginning. Pugh was the perfect host, not only in the choice of food and wines, not only in the placing of his guests, but in that most subtle art of neither talking himself too much nor too little, and of throwing out a word now and again for general notice, so as to prevent the talk from falling altogether into a number of unconnected duologues.

It was an admirable luncheon party; the behaviour of the guests was perfect. Hooper forgot to talk about America or to disparage Europe, and Dr. Hanson forgot to talk about butterflies. Paul talked equally with Dr. Hanson and Cecily: Canon Fairmead was at his best: Paterson talked with animation to Rowena Vereker-Prynn: Boomer forgot to be gallant, and Yvonne delighted Lady Cantire with anecdotes about her father, the Marquis, and his Royalist intrigue, and evidenced a filial piety which charmed the old lady beyond measure.

"You love your father very much," she had said,

and Yvonne had replied, with a great tenderness in her voice,

"Oh, but I love him. I do not know whom I more love, Papa or Paul."

"My dear," said Lady Cantire, "that is very sweet of you; too many young people nowadays break the Fifth Commandment."

"Ah! *Vraiment*; but my father, I love him so much," murmured Yvonne: "we are such, as you say, pals. If he were only with us here now I would be quite, quite happy."

Everybody fully enjoyed the luncheon: everybody talked easily: no one was in the least bored in spite of the variety of the company. This business of eating out of doors on a rock and the picnic magic in it seemed sensibly to have infected the party with a holiday spirit.

So much was everyone on the rock taken up with one another, that no one (for Fitton and Alphonse were half asleep in the launch a hundred yards off), saw a stout and ridiculous figure making its way painfully from stone to stone along the narrow causeway from the shore; and it was not until a pair of fat hands had appeared gripping the rock-edge behind Paul and the stranger had hauled himself laboriously up on to Black Rock that Yvonne saw him.

"*Oh, mon Dieu!*" she cried, with an accent of horror in her voice. But no one heeded her, for all eyes were now upon the intruder.

He was a short, fat man of any age between forty and fifty. He wore the clothes of the French lower middle class when on holiday; a long, loose frock coat that fell to his calves: grey and black-patterned trousers,

very baggy at the knees: a low-cut waistcoat which showed much of a starched shirt front, not too clean: a deep, fly-away collar over which oozed a succession of chins: and a broad, black, made-up bow tie. A heavy, silver-gilt watch-chain stretched in a double festoon across his stomach and he carried a hard felt hat, a size too small for him, on the back of his head. His face was large and fat and round, and his upper lip bore a ragged, reddish-brown moustache of the walrus variety. He looked, as indeed he was, a waiter in a provincial café out on a holiday. Each of his three chins was sparsely planted with short reddish bristles that pointed to his having shaved, or, perhaps, been shaved, some three or four days ago. He stood panting, for the climb had been an arduous one and he was clearly out of training, upon the higher part of Black Rock, and smiled benevolently down upon the company. He took a yellow linen handkerchief from his coat pocket, removed his hat, and mopped his brow generously; put his hat on again out of the straight and his handkerchief back into its pocket, and spread out his hands towards Yvonne.

"At last—at last, my little Néomi," he cried in French, with a marked Southern accent, and a strong melodramatic appeal, "—at last, I have found you. For years I have tried to find my little daughter—my little, golden-haired daughter—who ran away from home so many—oh! so many years ago. To find her and to say that all is forgotten: all is forgiven. It was but my duty as a father: as a father who loves his daughter: his little Néomi; to seek her out wherever she was: to take her to his breast: to bring her home again. I threw up my appointment—what is that, however, important, compared to a father's duty and

to his daughter's happiness? I traced my little Néomi to Monte Carlo, for my very old friend and once colleague, Jules Guercin, had told me of her; and from Monte Carlo I have followed her here. At last! I thank the good God, that at last I am able to . . .”

Had any of the picnic party looked at Yvonne instead of, as they did, wide-eyed, at the fat man in the frock coat, they might have been not a little interested in the emotions pictured in her face. Utter surprise, a hot anger, a momentary despair in turn held her, but as the orator proceeded another look came into the face of Yvonne: the look of one, who, though in a tight corner, begins to see a possible way of escape. She rose slowly to her feet, none noticing her, and cast a swift glance at the faces of those around the tablecloth.

Lady Cantire was glaring at the fat man through her lorgnette with disapproval. Yvonne had no fear of her. She knew nothing beyond menu French (she had learnt German as a girl) and was plainly wondering what on earth the man was saying. Canon Fairmead also knew no French. Major Boomer had that look of wise superiority upon his face which is peculiar to those who do not understand what is being said in a foreign tongue, but who wish their neighbours to think that they understand every word of it. So Boomer didn't matter. A similar look was shared by the Vereker-Prynnes and Dr. Hanson, and since Hooper was incapable of asking even for hot water except in 'American, there were only Pugh and Paterson to be considered—and Cecily. Paterson understood French easily and probably Kingston-Pugh caught most of it, but these knew so much already that this little more could scarcely make much difference. Still, there was

Cecily: Yvonne knew nothing of Cecily's French, and her face, as she gazed wonderingly up at the gesticulating figure beside her, was a mask and unreadable. She would have to risk Cecily. She gave a despairing, half-humorous glance down at the green and gold, silk jumper that she had on and at her white serge skirt that had but arrived that morning from Simone. She threw back her head and clasped her hands together in ecstasy.

"Oh, but," she cried, "it is Badot, the factor of my father: the good Badot. And he has come all the way from Niverseine to tell me that Néomi—that is my Borzoi, Lady Cantire, which I love so much—to tell me that my Néomi has five-six little pup-pees!"

And with a look of rapture on her face and a quick step backwards, the Comtesse de Niverseine disappeared in a shower of spray.

The Vereker-Prynnes screamed—Lady Cantire did not scream: she was a woman of an aristocratic spirit and practical. "Quick, Kenneth," she cried, "or she will be drowned." The men had all jumped to their feet and a bucket of ice that Paul had upset in his excitement rolled downwards across the tablecloth, carrying destruction with it and leaving a litter of broken glass and plates in its wake. Major Boomer swore volubly and unreprieved. Hooper put his foot through the salad-bowl. But before the drops of sea water had ceased to fall upon the rock: before Lady Cantire had ended her appeal to him, Kingston-Pugh had thrown off his coat and dropped into the green water. The fat man's bowler had fallen off in his agitation and now bobbed up and down upon the sea. He waved his hands wildly, crying:—

"Ma fille—ma petite fille. Elle sera noyée! Et

l'argent! Une grande somme! On le perd. Quel malheur!" But no one heeded him. All watched the water, where Kingston-Pugh supported Yvonne. The launch came up to them in a few seconds and Yvonne and Pugh were pulled on board.

"You two must go straight back to the Hotel and change," cried Lady Cantire from the rock. Yvonne shook the water from her hair and out of her eyes. "I want Badot to come too," she said. The launch flirted around to the rock-ledge and the fat man in the frock-coat was pushed into the boat in a somewhat dazed condition. The group of picnickers on the rock watched the launch as it turned and made for the harbour along the coast. Two wet and bedraggled figures sat beside each other in the stern: they seemed in good spirits and little the worse for their wetting. A gross figure of a man with a bald head sat in the bows: he looked bewildered and unhappy.

Yvonne waved a sodden handkerchief at the Rock. Lady Cantire waved back.

"They won't hurt from the water," she said decidedly, "but I'm sorry for her poor clothes." She turned and stared at the litter of broken crockery and spilt food upon the tablecloth. "And I've thoroughly enjoyed the picnic: Kenneth always does these things so well. Fitton, clear up this mess."

"It is very fortunate that she fell clear of the rock," said Canon Fairmead, "very fortunate indeed."

"The dear child," murmured Lady Cantire, "she is so fond of dogs."

Georges Baudiron (alias Badot) sat in an obscure café in Port St. Simon in front of an iron table. Facing him sat Jules Guercin of the Etablissement des

Bains of the Principality of Monaco. Guercin had ordered a *demi-blanc* for both and now he was all agog to hear the news. That it was bad news, Baudiron's face and manner bore witness; and it was not until he had drunk half of his beer that he found words for a commination that began in, unnaturally, cursing his daughter and ended in, more naturally, cursing 'the English. Baudiron knew nothing of Shakespeare, as was to be expected in a peasant—a peasant's peasant out of the Hautes Pyrénées—who, at the age of forty had won to head-waitership in the Café des Négociants in Marseilles, but, had he been familiar with that playwright, he might well have borrowed the words of Lear to speak his pain.

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child!"

He cursed Yvonne at her up-rising and her down-sitting: by day and night: by board and bed. He had been a model father—all the world was witness to it: he had launched her out into the world: he had shown her, of his ripe knowledge, the way of it: he had not only given her an education, he had even—out of the savings of years—lent her money to buy clothes with: a great sum, a thousand francs: the which (name of God and a dog) she had never paid back: on which she had never even paid interest. And now, when she had touched a fortune: (*—de Dieu!*), a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, five hundred thousand—God knew how many thousands of francs?—now to have nothing to do with him: to treat him like dirt: to throw herself into the sea: to let an Englishman . . . to . . . to . . ." and Georges Baudiron choked in his beer.

"But she is your daughter, my friend," broke in Guercin, soothingly, "you have a just claim. If she will not see what is her duty . . . she is still your daughter: she cannot stay at Pavois' as a Countess of Nowhere. It is easy, my friend, very easy. You have but to say: 'five thousand francs—ten thousand francs—and I do not trouble the Comtesse de Niverseine.' Good; and a little later you can go back and say: 'Just another ten thousand francs and' . . ."

"You are a fool."

"And why, then?"

"The damned Englishman . . ."

"The man she's living with?"

"Bah! No! He makes for nothing. It is not him. It is milord Pugh (Baudiron pronounced it "Pug"). I know his kind: they will stick at nothing—nothing, I tell you. He is a savage, a barbarian, a madman: like all his race. Ah, I know the type. On the way back to the harbour I began to explain, and he gripped my wrist until the bones nearly snapped, and said, in his horrible French, like a Spanish cow:—

"'If you say one word more I'll lift you up and drop you overboard.' Néomi got out at the quay and he packed off the engineman and brought me over in the launch himself—although he was wet through—and as he came into the Port St. Simon he took off his leather belt from around his trousers, a broad leather belt with a great silver buckle. 'You see this belt,' he said, 'and you see this buckle? If ever you set foot on the Ile de l'Escope or trouble the Comtesse de Niverseine in any way—I know who you are and all about you; you are at the Café des Négociants, at Marseilles—I will thrash you with the buckle end of this strap until your back is in ribbons. You under-

stand? I looked into his eyes: they were grey and cold like steel. I am brave, but I shuddered. He is not a man: he is a devil."

Baudiron gulped down the remainder of his beer.

"*Encore un demi,*" he shouted.

"Five hundred thousand francs," groaned Baudiron.

"A million of francs!" broke in Guercin, "all of a million: and you will touch nothing of it. I am thinking, my friend, that you are not a very brave man!"

"*Tu ne connais pas ce type-là,*" said Georges Baudiron, with a shudder.

CHAPTER XIV: PSYCHE UNENSLAVED

“I WILL not bathe in Table Bay to-day. I am tired of that place. *Ca m’ennuie.*”

Yvonne turned her back on Paul and shrugged her shoulders.

“Well, where shall we bathe?” said Paul, impatiently.

“I do not bathe this morning. Ah, there is Mr. Paterson. I want to talk to him.”

Yvonne turned and ran lightly down the steps to where Paterson was walking in the lower garden. Paul watched her with a frown darkening his face.

“I’m fed up too,” he muttered to himself.

He walked back towards the house. In the doorway he met Cecily Hanson coming out with Lux.

“Come for a walk,” said Paul, suddenly.

“Now?”

“Yes. Lux wants a run, too.”

Cecily leant forward and spoke to the dog.

“Come for a walk? Come for a nice walk?”

Lux pranced delightedly on all four legs at once and barked vociferously.

“He’s dying for a walk,” continued Paul. “Aren’t you, old fellow, and nobody takes you; and sitting on the sand looking after people’s clothes while they bathe, is a poor game, isn’t it? Come along.”

“Right. Where shall we go?”

“Let’s walk across to Lemale’s farm and down into Petit Val.”

"Are the others coming?"

Paul shook his head.

"Yvonne's a bit tired: she's not coming out this morning. Pugh and the others have gone for a swim."

Lux threw up his head and began to bark again.

"We're going for a walk, yes: a long walk," said Cecily, and the three set off, Lux leading the way in an elaborate dance of his own invention.

One of the chief delights of the Ile de l'Escope is that one can enjoy in so small an area, so great a variety of scene. The coast to the north-west, west and south-west, is bold and precipitous. Great cliffs tower above narrow and inaccessible beaches or rise sheer out of the green water. In the south-east and east, the land falls away gently to the coast, and here there are wide sands, and a salt marsh and the mouth of a small river, whilst to the north-east and north, the coast is low for the most part, but rocky and broken with creeks and coves and rock-reefs running out into the sea.

In the west of the island the land is high and bare; in the middle there are woods; and in the east, meadows and a river. This stream rises in the high ground in the west and runs eastward. The valley in the upper part of the stream is narrow and precipitous, but it widens and becomes shallower with the fall of the ground, and when it comes out of the middle woods and into the grassland, it runs quickly between sandy banks a half-dozen yards apart.

In these green meadows, beyond the dark woods, upon the bank of the stream, sat Paul and Cecily. A little way off Lux was busy trying to attract notice to himself by vigorously scraping out an abandoned rabbit burrow. A few feet below, the brook ran slowly

between banks of red earth. To the right, the forest lay like a dark cloak across the valley. To the left, in the far distance, gleamed the sea. Opposite, beyond the meadows, the hills rose evenly, here and there scarred with a rock outcrop. The soft, short grass at the river's bank was starred with daisies.

Cecily lay at length upon the grass with her elbows apart, her chin in the hollow of her hands, watching a small, green beetle give an acrobatic display at the end of a blade of grass. Paul sat beside her, his hands around his knees, chewing a stalk of wheat. They had said nothing or little for some time, when Cecily looked up from the green beetle (which had fallen off its trapeze in its last evolution) and said:

"I love this part of the island: I think it is the most beautiful of all."

Paul gazed at Cecily for some seconds before speaking. As she lay there in the grass, he thought that she looked as lovely—more lovely than any part of the landscape which she praised. If she was not technically beautiful, if her features (as compared to Yvonne's for instance) were irregular, her skin too brown from the sun, her hair not of gold, but between black and brown, a nondescript tint—yet her small, elfin face seemed to Paul very lovable: her dark hair which lay coiled upon her neck looked as though it would be very soft to the touch and Paul had a longing to uncoil it so that it should fall loose over the shoulders and to see how far it fell: her small mouth seemed to have been made for kisses, and her slender body so light that Paul longed to pick her up and hold her in his arms and see how little she really weighed. One may be to-day a lover of Apollo's lyre nor yet deaf to the reed notes of Pan, nor be skinned alive for it.

"I like the cliffs better and the rocks and the pools," said Paul, at last. "Do you know the cove I call Table Bay? I must take you there one day. It is very wild. I don't like this kind of scenery so much: these fields and this small stream and the low hills: it might be England."

"And that's why I love it," broke in Cecily. "It reminds me so much of a part of the Arwell at home where I used to play as a child; only there, there was a sandstone ledge on one side of the stream and caves in the cliff behind."

Paul sat up suddenly and stared at the slight figure lying among the daisies. Cecily continued to gaze down into the grass and flowers a few inches below her face. She did not look at Paul nor see the change in his expression that her words had caused. His eyes were bright with delight: his brow cleared of all cloud: his nostrils quivered; his mouth opening to speech and happy laughter.

"Reena-Daa!" he cried, "you are Reena-Daa. I knew I had seen you before. Isn't it jolly? And I am Pha-Mee. You haven't forgotten Pha-Mee, and Big Cave and the fire we made, and the tree-trunk across the stream and the Forest of the Tree-People and the day you fell into the water at the landing place, when you were filling the saucepan with water to boil on the fire in front of Big Cave, and how I pulled you out by your leg and how wet you were and bedraggled? And it was your new, white frock, for you were to go to a party that afternoon, and . . . and . . . Reena-Daa, Reena-Daa, I am Pha-Mee!"

Cecily looked up at Paul, and her grave eyes were less grave and she smiled as she spoke.

"Why, Paul, then we are old friends, very old

friends. Indeed, I have not forgotten Pha-Mee and the happy days of the Stone Age, when I was Reena-Daa."

If Paul had been less taken up with delight in his discovery, if his mind had been more in the present and not so much busied with the past, he might have noticed a certain coldness in Cecily's tone, a note of impatience almost, in that her memory of her childhood and the picture of a beloved playground had to some extent been marred by this memory of Paul. But Paul had, for the moment, quite forgotten the present: he had forgotten the intermediate past; and the past which held all his mind was of a childish love affair beside a stream—very much like this stream—years ago in Hampshire, when Paul himself was a slight figure in football shorts and a flannel shirt, and Cecily's hair had hung in a disorderly mane half way down her back, and her skirts barely touched her knees and they had been King and Queen together of the Cave Dwellers in the sandstone cliffs.

Paul had loved elsewhere and otherwise since—there had been Monica: there was Yvonne; and before Monica there had been others—of a sort, but now it seemed to him, in the flood of such tender memories, that there had only been Cecily, for it is common nature to remember most these first awakenings of passion, when there is no previous memory to cloud the mirror of the mind, and no probation is needed to forget what must first be forgotten.

So Paul, in this sudden knowledge, saw not the field of flowers and this stranger stream and the island hills and the sea afar off, nor the black and gold butterflies, nor Lux scraping at his rabbit hole, but the scarps above the Arwell and the round mouth of a cave: not

Cecily, tall and composed, in a white cotton skirt and a yellow jumper and her hair bunched upon her neck under a yellow felt hat; but a small figure, in a loose holland frock hanging from the shoulders by two loops, with legs in black stockings that were continually coming down and collecting in wrinkles above the instep; with brown arms and hands not too clean, and with a mane of untidy, dark brown hair; not Cecily Hanson, five and twenty years of age, silent and self-secure with knowledge of the world and of man and a contempt for both of them, but only Reena-Daa, leaning on Pha-Mee and a great talker, without any bitterness, without knowledge and without contempt.

And so Paul, who was Pha-Mee, stretched out his hands towards Reena-Daa, who was Cecily Hanson and not Reena-Daa save in the mind of Paul, and cried:

"Reena-Daa, Reena-Daa, I love you, as I have always loved you from the beginning. You and only you." And Paul would have seized hold of Cecily and taken her in his arms and kissed her on the lips had she not quickly sprung up and away, to the great joy of Lux, who imagined that at last she had come to play with him.

"Paul, how dare you!"

But Paul could only babble foolishly:

"Cecily, my Cecily. Why, we have always loved one another, Reena-Daa. We have loved, have kissed each other so many times. Don't you remember—don't you remember how . . ."

The high colour in Cecily's cheek, lighting the olive tint of her skin, made her look prettier than ever.

"How dare you make love to me," replied Cecily, hotly. "You, a married man with four or five, or is

it six, children? (She never seems to be able to remember how many it is.) You—you, who . . ." and Cecily choked with indignation.

This reminder of Yvonne came to Paul like a cold douche. He had entirely forgotten Yvonne in the heat of the moment; forgotten altogether that he was supposed to be happily married, to be the husband of a Countess, to be the father of so many children. He pulled himself together with an effort. This had been madness: a midsummer madness, born of memories, of too dearly beloved dreams. He was still Paul Fennimore, husband of the Comtesse de Niverseine. It was, at least, something that Cecily believed this: that she had known him in that far and wonderful past, but as Paul and as Pha-Mee, that his family name was nothing to her. For this dispensation, at least, Paul felt grateful, and he began, marvellously quickly considering that he had but just recalled the present, to take the part of the unloved husband—of the victim of the unhappy marriage—of the relict in love of the faithless wife.

The eagerness died out of his voice, the light from his eyes. His arms fell listlessly to his side, his figure seemed visibly to have shrunk. At a word, he had grown old.

"You are right; there is my wife—my *wife*." He no longer looked at Cecily, but across the stream with a fixed stare that clearly saw nothing of the earthly landscape. He sighed heavily.

"I had forgotten. It is so easy to forget, to forget some things—those things, when one remembers others. Forgive me. Of course, there is Yvonne."

Paul ran his fingers through his hair. He continued

to stare at nothing. Cecily did not speak. She watched Paul, thoughtfully, and the shadow of a smile lay upon her lips. Lux, finding that these humans had, after all, not jumped up to play with him, but only to perform some stupid manœuvre of their own, returned to his advertisement of the rabbit hole.

"I wonder," continued Paul, in a dreamy voice, "I have often wondered how many—how few—marriages can be called happy. Every day one meets married people—young married people, old married people, people that have been married for so many years—and to the world, to all outward seeming, they are happily married. They witness with loud voices to the blessedness of the institute—"the world's good word!"—but how very few out of those many are happy. It is the great conspiracy. No other band of conspirators is so great or so united. No other society can boast of so wide a membership, of such discipline in its ranks, of so negligible an apostasy. Anarchists, Marxians, Labour, the International, the Friends, Masons, Rome itself are but small in numbers and weak through schisms compared to the great society of the married. No Trade Union to-day treats its black-legs, or Church its heretics, with the rigour that the society of the married does those who dare to publish themselves, though married, as yet unhappy."

Paul took his cigarette case from his pocket and lit a cigarette. His hand that held the match shook, so that two matches were used before the cigarette was rightly alight. He smoked the cigarette in quick, nervous puffs.

"I have been married," continued Paul, "six years—and those six years . . . I do not wish to think of them. A few minutes ago I had happily forgotten

them. Yvonne . . . Yvonne" (Paul choked slightly over the name) "never loved me. Her mother was a very clever woman. The barren acres of Niverseine were but a poor patrimony. I was a young Englishman of means. Yvonne was very beautiful, is still very beautiful to look at . . . I admit it even now . . . It is an old story, perhaps the oldest and saddest story in the world. The scheming mother: the beautiful daughter without a dowry: the rich suitor—it is the history of my marriage and true to type in all its details. It is easy to forget that I am married, that I have children, whom I love and whom their mother—hates, that . . ."

"Paul," broke in Cecily, suddenly. "You are nothing like so good a liar as Yvonne. You are too crude, too gross. You lack *finesse*. Get her to give you some lessons before you tell me any more stories."

Paul dropped his half smoked cigarette and gaped at Cecily.

"What . . . what . . ." he stammered, "you know all about it? That Yvonne . . . that we are not married . . . that she is not . . . that . . . that . . ."

"I know enough," broke in Cecily, with decision. "I do not wish to hear any more stories. No, not even a true story: it might be even less pleasant than the other ones. Why you are living here with this woman—this music-hall Countess—I don't know: nor do I care. It is a matter of no interest to me and I do not want to hear any more about it."

"But how—how did you find out?" gasped Paul. "That damn scoundrel of her father, I suppose . . ."

"Yes, I understood him. But I knew from the beginning that you were not married to this woman."

"Good God!" gasped Paul, "who told you? Not Monica?"

"No, Lux."

Cecily knelt down among the daisies and put her arm around the wolf-hound.

"And did the good dog tell me all about it, then, the good, clever dog?"

"Lux told you?" shouted Paul. "Are you mad?"

Cecily looked up from her rubbing of Lux behind his ears.

"Next time," said Cecily, slowly, "you wish to pose as being married, see that your wife's dog is yours also. Lux knew and obeyed Yvonne; he neither knew you nor obeyed you. Husbands—permanent husbands, not temporary husbands—are accepted by their dogs."

"Then everybody knows?" gasped Paul.

"Myself and Kingston-Pugh and Mr. Paterson. The Boomer man, possibly, has his suspicions."

"Lady Cantire . . ."

"She is not our generation. And the others . . ."

Paul shook himself.

"What does it matter—now? Yvonne—is not my wife, she is nothing to me, she never was. I was mad; that is all over now. I thought I loved Monica, once, and then . . . it was a madness. And now I know I only love you—you. Cecily—Cecily of old, Reena-Daa . . ."

"Mr. Fennimore," interrupted Cecily, in a cold and formal voice, "you are, pardon me, too catholic a lover; at least, for my taste. You are, I think, too old to be again my lover, and I am, happily, still too young. You will meet me, in the future, as a Mr. Fennimore; of, I believe, Somersetshire, and the husband of the beautiful and charming Comtesse de Niverseine. My

interest in your affairs does not extend beyond your dog: Lux and I will walk back by ourselves."

Paul stood and watched Cecily until she disappeared among the trees. He was very angry and he cursed, with equal bitterness, Yvonne, Cecily and Lux.

CHAPTER XV: A PURITAN *IN POSSE*

AT the foot of the tall cliffs, which flank on the West the narrow beach where a week ago a duel was to have taken place, a wide rock ledge runs out into the sea. This shelf is broken here and there with fissures and strewn with boulders, that have, in time of storm, been wrenched from the cliffs above and caught by this broad step from falling into the water. Perched on the top of one of these round rocks sat Yvonne. Below her, with his back against the stone upon which she sat, with his head on a level with her knees, sprawled John Paterson, sucking at a foul and aged briar pipe and staring across the blue water with wide open eyes. For a long while these two had sat thus upon these rocks without a word to one another, so busy was each with thought. The sea-birds wheeled in circles overhead, circles for ever growing nearer and less in diameter as the two intruders remained still and silent, without motion and without speech. The green water below lapped against the rock with a rhythmic cadence. Far out on the blue sea two small triangles of white grew slowly larger, and at last were to be seen as fishing boats, with dark hulls and masts and a dot of a man at the tiller. The black mass of a tramp steamer, capped with a cloud of smoke, crawled painfully along the horizon towards Port St. Simon. Half a mile away, a small skiff bobbed up and down on the swell and from its stern old Auguste Léhac tended his lines. But none of these things, nor the

rocks below them, nor the sea about them, were seen by Paterson or by Yvonne.

They were both filled with thoughts as is an egg with meat.

But whereas the thoughts and images in the mind of Yvonne were particular; the thoughts in the mind of Paterson were general and the images that flitted past his mind's eye were many and each one different from any other, and they followed upon one another's heels so swiftly that the outlines became at times a little blurred, as though a movie-man had bought an odd lot of films at an auction, and had run them off on his machine, a hotch-potch at high-speed.

Yvonne had concern only for the present; and, although she gazed before her out across the water, with no side glance downwards, she saw John Paterson very clearly, a thickset figure of a man, with blue eyes and a broken face, strong and kindly, with experience of men and affairs: a man who, in his time, had played, and had still to play, many parts: a man of the world and yet not of it: strong and yet gentle: human and yet humane. And the thoughts in Yvonne's mind clustered like a nebula about this picture: softening a roughness here, deepening a shadow there, and reflecting an image of herself in a juxtaposition: an image of beauty and of frailty: of strength and of weakness: an ornament against this simplicity: a softness upon this agate: a stain upon this purity: flame and ice: an acid to eat into this rock. Thought in the mind of Yvonne was (as the philosopher has it) not thought but intuition and father to images rather than to concepts.

Thought in the mind of John Paterson was neither of himself, nor particularly of Yvonne; but of man-

kind and of the way in life and of the end of action and of first causes and of the chain of effect: of sin and sorrow: of pain and of death. Images passed and repassed with so great a suddenness that they were but partly seen: mere flashes of landscape, of unfinished actions, of the faces of men and women fading from the screen almost at the moment when they appeared. These pictures, superimposed on each other in their hurry, were vague in detail, but an outline here, a *motif* there, being held in the memory; an interminable series. A village in the Scotch lowlands: a clergyman in rusty black before an open grave, peasants snuffing and coughing around him in the bitter wind: a bare attic in Aberdeen, and himself, a gawky lad, poring over the pages of Blackstone: a crowd around a pit-head, a black-leg breaking from the crowd, with jacket split up the back and bleeding at the mouth. A com-

mittee room, with a dozen men seated around a great table. A tawdry figure in the Waterloo road, seeking for custom. A dog run over by a motor lorry. An old-young man, in a stained cloak and a black beard, sitting at a small iron table, drinking *une verte*, a man with bright eyes and restless fingers who had once been a poet. An old and decrepit man with untidy white hair, shuffling across a club smoking-room, trailing a rug behind him. A board meeting of a bankrupt company and the face of the managing director. The face of a dancer in a cabaret. Faces in the crowd along the Cannebière. A pediment against a saffron sky: boys, as slender as fawns, with honey-coloured skins, diving for pennies into an emerald sea. The storm-scarred bows of a tramp steamer, now reeling heaven-high into the air, now plunging into the foam until green water swept the lower deck from stem to stern. A camp-fire

between the river bank and the pine trees: the mosquitoes dancing ceaselessly up and down in a cloud over the water. Broadway, at night, under the skysigns. A Mayfair drawing-room. The reading room of the British Museum. The cloisters of St. Trophime and an aged figure in a ragged cassock walking therein. A vineyard above Fiesole: a pock-marked beggar outside Santa Maria in Cosmedin. The ward of a large hospital. Scenes—lightning flashes of scenes—in Europe, in Asia, in America. Before-the-war pictures: war pictures. A shell-burst in a trench: shattered bodies that had once been men. The dump called Euston: the ridge above Serre, strewn with the broken ferro-concrete pilons of a projected power-line. The mine heaps of Noeux-les-Mines. The shattered hamlet of Brielen: the Menin Gate: guns and butterflies in Aveluy Wood. Gun pits: block-houses: a dug-out: a dressing station: beds in a base hospital: Rouen: Etaples. An endless series of pictures, of parts of pictures, of places, of actions, of the faces of men and women.

These, all these, and a hundred other pictures passed through the mind of John Paterson, as he sat propped up against the enduring rock, with his head almost brushing against the hem of the skirt of Yvonne, and before him, and unseen by him, the bent back of Lé hac, fishing boats, the distant yellow streak of the coast of France and the sea. Through all this cinema show of the memory there ran a concept: an enquiry into causes: an asking after effects: a seeking after a teleological conception: an attempt to fix a lowest common multiple to which all these so variable factors might be reduced. As it had held the minds of Calvin and of Knox, of Hegel and Kant, and to a more material

motion, of Huxley and Darwin, so also did it hold the mind of John Paterson. If it might have been said of Yvonne that she was only concerned with causes: so Paterson was but interested in effects. As Yvonne lived in the beginning, so Paterson was for ever troubling about the end.

August Léhac had by now hauled in his lines, and a number of silver fish flopped about the bottom of his boat in their death agony. He put out his oars, and sculled slowly and painfully towards the rocks. The tramp steamer had passed out of sight behind the headland that shelters the Port St. Simon. A sea-bird, grown bold by the silence and stillness of these two on the rock-shelf, had perched not half-a-dozen feet away from Paterson.

At last Yvonne spoke.

"My friend," she said, speaking in French, not easily, as was her custom, but with some sign of effort—"my friend, the last time I talked with you—when I sought your sympathy and your help: that night, under the moon, on the terrace: do you remember?"

"I remember," murmured Paterson, sucking noisily at his pipe.

"I was a fool then. I should not have talked in the way I did; but I have so often, so often before. . . . You were right; it is true. I cannot claim your sympathy unless I tell you a true tale—the truth about myself. And I need it so much, dear friend: your sympathy and your help. So I shall now tell you what I have never told before to anyone; the true story. Listen."

John Paterson took his pipe out of his mouth and looked up into the blue eyes of Yvonne.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a troubled voice, "I have

no wish . . . I think I would rather not hear . . .”

“But you must—you must hear me!” cried Yvonne. Paterson bowed his head.

“Very well: I listen.”

“Once upon a time,” began Yvonne, in a low voice, “there was a peasant in the Pyrénées—not a peasant farmer, but just a common labourer on a peasant’s farm—who married a woman of the same class as his (she was only seventeen when he married her) and to them was born a daughter—myself. I was the first-born, and later three other children were born, two boys and a girl. The boys grew up: the younger one is now a *chasseur* at a dance-hall in Nice: the elder was a waiter in a café in Bordeaux, but since the war I do not know what has become of him. My sister, the youngest of us, fell into a mountain stream when she was six years old and we had not yet left the Pyrénées, and she was drowned.

When I was twelve years old, my father left the mountains and we went to Montpellier, where he had obtained a post as a waiter in the Hotel du Centre. I liked Montpellier better than the Brigaudin. There were more people: there was more life; and we lived more comfortably. There was always, or almost always, enough to eat. My mother also worked in the kitchen of the hotel. We were not badly off.

When I was fifteen my mother died, suddenly, of pneumonia. With her death, part of the family income ceased. Georges made a few sous as an errand boy for one of the shops, but Jean was too young, as yet, to earn any money. I, also, began to work in one of the big shops, but the work wearied me: I hated it—and the girls who worked with me; and, above all, Madame.

When I was seventeen, I was beautiful—not so beau-

tiful as I am to-day, but still, beautiful—and I was already a woman. There were better things to do—even in Montpellier—than to be a slave in a shop. But I was wise—I was not like the other girls: I sought something more than money—more than the immediate return. I looked ahead; I considered my career—even at Montpellier. I was beautiful; and, more, I was young. Old Panaque, the vintner, would have given much—and my father was furious with me for not accepting his offer—but I was wise: I knew better than to throw myself away in Montpellier: I sought for something of more value in the end than money—an education.

There was a student then at Montpellier from your University of Oxford: he was there to improve his French and he was a clever and a cultured man. During the year that I lived with him I learnt much; and, particularly, I learnt to speak English passably well. It was essential for me to speak English: I had decided that from the beginning. . . . Also, I grew very fond of Geoffrey and when, a year and a half later, there came the war and he had to join the English Army, I was very unhappy to see him go.

Soon after the outbreak of the war, my father obtained the post of head waiter in the Café des Négociants in Marseilles, and we left Montpellier. My father was in a low medical category and he was never called up. He remained in Marseilles. But Marseilles was no place for me and I decided to go elsewhere. I borrowed some money from my father for clothes and so-forth and went to Nice . . . and afterwards to Paris, to Biarritz, to Cannes and to Monte Carlo. And I have succeeded. I am only twenty-three—twenty-four now—and I am very beau-

tiful. Dear friend, don't you think I am beautiful?"

Yvonne bent low over the head of Paterson, but he did not look up into her face: he still stared fixedly out to sea.

"There—there is the true history of myself," added Yvonne. "Will you give me your sympathy now? Now that I have been so truthful? Will you give me your help—your love?"

John Paterson was about to speak, but before he found words for a beginning, Yvonne slipped down suddenly from the top of her rock and over on to Paterson, before he could move away. She flung her arms around his neck and pressed her mouth to his, before he was quite aware of what had happened.

He jumped to his feet, carrying Yvonne with him; and (not too gently) freed himself from her encircling arms. "Mademoiselle," he cried, breathlessly, "no, no. I do not love you . . . I . . ."

"But I do not understand—I do not understand, my friend. Am I not beautiful?" And Yvonne drew herself up to her full height and held out her arms horizontally from the shoulders on either side of her, so that, as she stood there with the sunlight caught up in her hair, and her lips half parted and her eyes aflame with passion, and her perfect body held thus rigid and lightly balanced as though a model to any Grecian chisel, the very rock itself might have grown soft beneath her small feet and the sea have climbed up against gravity to woo her, and the amorous sea-bird have taken the dove's part and dropped to perch upon her round and slender arm. But John Paterson stepped back a few paces from her, and his eyes were veiled with trouble and he did not smile.

"I cannot love you," he said, slowly and sorrowfully.

Yvonne sat down limply on her rock; her arms fell listlessly to her side and she spoke with bowed head.

"It is because I am a common person: a woman of no importance—of no account,—*demi-mondaine*— *une grue*: it is that? You think I am but *une femme entretenue*: the mistress of Paul. But you don't know; you don't know. It is not so. It is the other way round. I am no longer of the half-world. I am of the world. I am rich—very rich: with money that I have won myself: won at the Casino: at Monte Carlo. Half a million francs! It is I who brought Paul here because he started my luck. I was kind to him out of gratitude. I am no longer a woman to be pointed at, an outcast. I have money, much money: I am of the world!"

John Paterson sat down beside Yvonne. He took one of her small hands between his.

"No, don't kiss me," he began, as she raised her head towards his. "I am but human, after all, and . . ."

"I thank you, at least, for that compliment," murmured Yvonne.

". . . and I do not love you."

Yvonne shook her golden head in dissent, but Paterson continued.

"You are not quite just to me—Yvonne. But I cannot blame you for that: it is very natural that you should think so. But I want you to believe this one thing at least. Whether you are of the world or of those unhappy ones of the half-world is irrelevant to me. I have, indeed, a greater contempt for what is called the world than I have for what is called the half-world, where there is more need for pity than for blame. Were you the commonest walker by night about St. Lazare and not the beautiful and clever and witty

woman that you are, it would be all the same to me, did I love you."

"*Chéri*," murmured Yvonne, ecstatically; her slender fingers tightening around his as they lay in his hand.

"But still I do not love you—and I cannot love you, however beautiful you are, for you and I are of different natures—as unlike as black to white; as apart as water and fire."

"But is not that why I love you? Why I want you to love me—Oh! so much!" broke in Yvonne.

"Listen," continued Paterson. "This may be difficult for you to believe, but one day you must yet believe it. Wealth is nothing: it has no value. The good things—the things that you now think to be good—beautiful clothes and rare foods and wines and palaces to live in—are not good but evil: they are worthless: they cannot last. You think foolishly that the mere possessing of money can better the world for you: that to be rich is to be happy: that once you are rich, all desires can be satisfied. It is a vain hope. Happiness is not to be won in this manner."

Yvonne bowed her head.

"That is true," she murmured, softly, "for I now want you."

"You talk of the world and the half-world," continued John Paterson, "but they are the same—and both worthless. They are both as cities built on sand, for they live (and die) by material things which, also, do not endure. You talk of love—but the love you talk of is but a passion which dies in the moment that it is satisfied: a flame that consumes itself. Love is but one thing, the sacrifice of self: the immolation of self. And beyond that, mere physical beauty is but a delusion and a snare."

"So if I was ugly you would, then, love me?" broke in Yvonne.

"Child, you do not understand. You are still a little Pagan, happy with toys. But you will soon grow too old for toys and you will weep alone in the great nursery of the world and it will be no comfort to you that you have all the money to buy new dolls and larger Noah's Arks and a more beautiful rocking horse; for then you will have no more pleasure in horses or arks or dolls. You will be very lonely in the playground of the world: you will despise the money which but buys toys; and you will hate toys and the other children who are still content to play with them."

"You would love me if I was poor?" whispered Yvonne, gazing up in Paterson's face.

John Paterson shook his head and his blue eyes were full of pity.

"I cannot love you at all, for we mean different things by love. For you are still a Pagan—a beautiful Pagan: whilst I am a Christian, an ugly, solemn, stupid Christian; and you believe in beauty and strength and health and riches and I believe but in ugliness and in poverty and in pain."

Yvonne stared out across the water for some seconds and then, slipping her hand out of Paterson's, she turned and walked dejectedly away.

John Paterson sat for half-an-hour longer alone upon the rocks. Many more pictures and fragments of pictures passed before him: then, he, too, rose and walked back, soberly, to the hotel.

CHAPTER XVI: THE BUTTING IN OF MAJOR BOOMER

IT began, as many a greater matter has begun, in a flash of temper over a trifle.

Yvonne had decided not to bathe, but instead to go out in the launch and potter about among the caves and creeks at the back of the island. As Paul wanted to bathe—and particularly to bathe with Yvonne in Table Bay—he followed her down to the quay in an ill humour.

He hated these excursions in the boat, and, as Pugh and Boomer were to come too, he saw that his part in the business would lie chiefly in making himself agreeable to the crew or lying with Lux in the bows, if Cecily had not already taken that sagacious animal for a walk.

As it happened, he was spared the companionship of Lux (against whom he felt no small spite) as he was nowhere to be found at starting, and Yvonne, with Pugh and Boomer on either side of her, and Paul bringing up the rear, walked down to the harbour dogless. The launch lay beside the seaweed-grown steps at the end of the jetty, with Morin, the engineer, holding the boat close against the steps with a boat-hook caught into a crevice in the masonry.

Kingston-Pugh ran quickly down the steps and jumped into the launch first and, holding out his hand, helped Yvonne over the gunwale, to the evident chagrin of the Major, who had promised himself this privilege,

but had not been prepared for the sudden agility of Kingston-Pugh.

Yvonne sat down in the stern, followed by Boomer; and Paul was just about to step down into the boat, when she looked up and said suddenly:—

“Oh, Paul dear, I know it will be cold on the water. I shall want my cloak. Run up and fetch it—you know, the white one: Annette will give it to you.”

Yvonne smiled sweetly on Paul, but Paul was angry and hurt by Yvonne's refusal to bathe with him, and altogether out of love with this marine excursion, and he stepped sulkily into the boat.

“Oh, damn the cloak!” he growled; “you don't want it: it's quite warm.”

He sat down lumpishly in the middle of the boat and muttered something under his breath about women always wanting men to fetch and carry for them. He behaved very admirably as though he and Yvonne had been married for years.

But Boomer was delighted. His large, red face glowed with satisfaction, and he jumped up in the boat so suddenly that the lurch he caused made Morin lose his grip with the boat-hook, and the launch drifted away from the quay and was only brought in again at the imminent risk of Morin over-balancing himself and falling into the water.

“Let me go, Countess,” said Boomer, hurriedly, lest Paul should change his mind and awake to his duties, “I'd love to go: delighted, only too delighted.”

Yvonne beamed sunnily upon him.

“Oh, Major Boomer, how *sweet* of you! I know I shall be so cold on the sea,” and Yvonne shuddered prophetically. “Ring for Annette when you get to the hotel and ask her for my white cloak: my white cloak

from Madeleine. She will know. We wait here for you. Thank you so much, Major Boomer."

"Charmed, dear Countess, charmed," muttered the Major, stepping heavily ashore.

"A husband—he is no good, Mr. Pugh, is he?" murmured Yvonne.

Kingston-Pugh laughed and Paul growled something that was, happily, unintelligible.

Major Boomer strode up the path to the hotel, very well pleased with himself. It is always an agreeable thing to perform a small service for a pretty woman and, at the same time, place the husband in a bad light. Boomer laughed silently to himself and pulled at his moustache and thought how fine a fellow he was. When he reached the hotel he went into the lounge, rang for a waiter and asked for Annette and a whisky and soda. He felt hot and thirsty after the steep walk up to the house.

"*Madam désire sa manteau—le manteau blanche de Madeleine. Apportez-moi ça,*" he said, in his bastard French.

"*Bien, M'sieur,*" murmured Annette. "*Je vais le chercher.*"

And while Annette was gone to fetch the cloak, Major Boomer addressed himself to the whisky and soda. By the time he had finished his drink, Annette had come down with the cloak. She placed it, carefully folded, over the Major's arm. He strode out of the hotel in even a better spirit than he had entered it: he had the garment of a woman he desired over his arm, and a large whisky and soda inside him.

It is not only pleasant to do a small service for a beautiful woman who is someone else's wife, but it is also very especially pleasing to be carrying in one's

arms some part of that woman's apparel, even if it be nothing more intimate than a cloak. It gives the holder of this, and the would-be lover, some foretaste of the feeling of possession: some hint, as it were, that one is on the road to hold the woman herself in one's arms in due time. For there is nothing more personal, more individual, more intimate, than clothes. The cloak that Major Boomer carried so carefully over his arm had itself been wrapped many times around the body of Yvonne. He had often seen it on her. It was very much a part of her: cut to her form, scented with the perfume that she used. And with this thought, as he made his way down the crooked path to the quay, Major Boomer, it is to be regretted, took the liberty of lifting the soft fabric of the cloak up to his face and of kissing it with some ardour. In doing this, he raised the part of the cloak where there was a small pocket, out of which something fell on to the ground. Major Boomer heard the slight noise of its fall and stopped. Bending down, he picked up a small, thin, gold card-case. With its impact on the ground, the card-case had sprung open and a number of rectangular pieces of white pasteboard decorated the path.

Major Boomer collected these scattered cards carefully. The greater number of them bore the inscription:

Mlle. Yvonne Quesnoy

181^{bis}, rue Fourcroy,
Paris 17e

Wagram. 081.374

but there was a miscellany of others, the greater number of them being English. There was one of

Mr. Paul Bellamy,

87, Grenville Street, W.C.1.

and a number, including two general officers, whose names were familiar to Boomer, and which it were indiscreet to name.

Major Boomer put the cards back into the card-case with great care and the card-case back into the pocket of the cloak. He stood for a moment in thought and then went on down the path with almost a triumphant air. He was pleased to find that a certain suspicion which had been bourgeoning in his mind for some days was proved to be correct; and, moreover, he saw, in the knowledge that was now his, a certain help towards the end which he had in view. He whistled cheerfully as he walked.

Yvonne was very gracious to him when he reached the launch, and she let him help her on with the cloak and made him sit beside her while Paul went and sulked in the bows.

During the morning, and throughout the voyage, Major Boomer made himself so generally agreeable that Yvonne (who, in her heart, had always disliked the man) was ready to admit him more of a gentleman than she could have, before, believed possible. He was courteous without being offensively gallant to her: he showed no jealousy against Kingston-Pugh: he made no attempt to lord it over the sulky Paul, or to show, even, that he noticed his ill-humour. His conduct was altogether admirable. It is wonderful how greatly the promise of success—even in a wrong cause—will improve the manners. When the voyage was over and they had returned to the hotel, it was almost with a feeling inclined to regret that Yvonne parted with Major Boomer before going upstairs to change for lunch.

After lunch—a gloomy affair at which Paul was more

boorish than ever—Yvonne went up to her room, and Paul, after a deplorable exhibition of bad temper and conjugal infelicity in front of Annette, went out to bathe by himself. Boomer hung about the terrace most of the afternoon in the hope of finding Yvonne alone. But he had no fortune in this. It was not until tea-time that Yvonne appeared from the house, and then she sat in a chair and drank tea with Lady Cantire, whilst Major Boomer, at the other end of the terrace, sipped at a whisky and soda with Hooper and watched Yvonne longingly and paid no attention to what Hooper was saying.

After tea, he had no better luck, for Yvonne had left Lady Cantire to walk with Paterson, and Boomer's amiability of the morning had by now worn sufficiently thin for him to be offensive to Paul over a dry Martini before dinner.

With his dinner, the Major drank a bottle of the Widow. He hoped to bring the matter to a happy ending that night and he felt that he needed such a stimulant to gallant endeavour. This excellent medicine certainly cured very swiftly the relapse into the dismal into which he had fallen, for a moment, before dinner; and, as the level of the sparkling flood in the gold-necked bottle grew lower, his spirits rose. He wielded his fork and knife with the air of a conqueror: his white shirt front grew rounder: his face, redder: his moustache bristled more fiercely: his eyes gleamed; and he looked more often and more earnestly towards the Fennimores' table on his right hand than he should have done in so public and so formal a place.

Yet, to be sure, Yvonne that night was very worthy of regard. Annette had excelled herself in hair-dressing, and the golden cloud about Yvonne's head,

bound with a silver cord, framed in the dark curtains behind her, was as if she had been painted by Leonardo or by Giorgione, or by some old and forgotten master when all the world was Pagan. She wore a simple frock of black taffeta, brodered with silver, and even Paul, who had seen her in and out of so many dresses and who was in as bad a temper as any man should be, was forced to gaze at her in some approval and sensibly to listen to her when she spoke: to reply in a not unmannerly manner; and even, after he had drunk some wine, to touch her fingers with his when they rested for an instant upon the table. Paul and Yvonne left the dining-room first, and, a little later, Major Boomer came out on to the terrace. He stood for a moment on the steps, smoking his cigar and gazing far into the night. Suddenly, he gave an exclamation of delight. A slight figure stood alone beside the myrtles at the far end of the terrace; even at that distance and in the darkness, Major Boomer knew it to be Yvonne. He hurried across the terrace with quick, eager steps, towards where she stood. He flattered himself that he was in luck this night, for Yvonne was quite alone at her end of the terrace; there was no sign of Paterson, of Paul or of Pugh: Lady Cantire was in the house, and Canon Fairmead and Dr. Hanson, who sat smoking on the terrace, were half-a-hundred yards away.

Yvonne stood very still, gazing out into the night, and did not seem to hear the Major until he was beside her.

"Good evening, Countess," he said, softly.

"Oh, it is you, Major Boomer? Isn't it a lovely night?"

"It is, indeed," sighed the Major, and he might have

added that it was on such a night as this that Troilus mounted upon the Trojan walls and sighed his soul towards the Grecian tents, where Cressid lay. For such a thought was in his mind. But as Major Boomer's memories of the theatre were wholly of the music-hall stage, he merely remarked upon the moon, and sighed again.

"The moon, she is very lovely to-night," agreed Yvonne.

"But not so lovely as you are, Countess," murmured the Major.

It was the direct attack, which Major Boomer had found successful on more than one occasion before and one which naturally appealed to him. He had little patience or skill to continue the more elaborate and subtler methods. At another time Yvonne might have repulsed so crude a compliment, but the Major had shown himself so agreeable that morning, and, now, under the moon, she was in a sentimental mood, so that she let the manner pass and even was ready to appreciate the bluntness of it; for bluntness and honesty are commonly thought to go together. So Yvonne simply smiled and said, gently:

"I thank you for the compliment."

"You are very, very beautiful. There is no one so lovely as you are . . . Countess—Yvonne, I love you."

Boomer leant forward and tried to take her hand, but Yvonne had slipped quickly away. It was not possible in the light clearly to see her face, but Boomer could tell from the tone of her voice, as well as from the words spoken, that she was very angry.

"Major Boomer! What do you do? *Ah! c'est une bêtise*; you are mad . . . it is insult . . . to me, a wife. *Animal!*"

But Major Boomer only babbled, incoherently, "I love you: I love you, Yvonne—dearest Yvonne." He made another movement towards her.

Yvonne shrank away.

"But you are mad," she cried—"mad: *vous êtes pompette*: drunk—tight—*gris comme un Polonais*!"

"I love you—I love you—my beautiful one," repeated Boomer, fatuously.

"Go—go away at once: or I will tell my husband, and he will shoot you dead. *C'est effroyable . . .*"

"Your husband? Ah, my little Yvonne, you don't understand. I know all about it—all about it. Aha, your husband—and his wife, the Countess! You don't think I believe all that, do you? You take me for a fool—like the rest of them here," and the gallant Major laughed an unpleasant laugh into the darkness. "I know everything. I knew the thing was a put-up job from the beginning. I am not a fool. And, Yvonne, I love you—I love you, I am mad for you. Leave this fellow Paul—he isn't worth it—and come away with me. At least, I am a man. We'll go to Monte together—or Biarritz or anywhere you like: it's a dull hole here anyway, and we'll have a real, good time together, you and I."

"You are drunk—quite drunk," muttered Yvonne. "Mon Dieu, I do not love Paul very much now—*vraiment*: but to love you . . . *on ne peut pas . . . ne peut pas . . .*"

"Yvonne," cried Major Boomer, hoarsely, "if you will not love me, let me love you—I will . . . I will tell everything: that you are not married to this man: that you are not a Countess at all—but only a . . . er . . . *a demi-mondaine* from God knows where. I'll—I'll, damme, I'll spoil your game here anyhow. But

no, no: there is not need for that: listen, dearest . . ."

But Yvonne was paying no further heed to the exposition of Boomer. She stood, stiffly, with the tips of her fingers resting on the coping of the stone balustrade before her, staring, wide-eyed, into the soft darkness of night, and laughing.

Boomer's phrases died away into broken words. This laughter, and the odd note in it, disconcerted him. He did not like it, nor could he understand it.

"Yvonne . . . I am . . . I . . . Yvonne . . ." he stuttered, altogether at a loss at the sound of this laughter.

Yvonne ceased to laugh suddenly, and when she spoke there was nothing humorous in her tone of voice, and had her face been visible it would have been seen to be not only grave but sorrowful.

"Major Boomer," she said, speaking very slowly, as though meticulous in her choice of words, "you are too late. It is clever in you to know all this—for it is true. *Vous avez raison*. But now—you are too late, I say. It does not matter. I do not care—any more. I shall no more be the Comtesse de Niverseine. That does not matter, for to-morrow—or after to-morrow—I go away from here. But not with you, *mon vieux*. I go—all alone. It was a good idea in you to think of this—to (how you say it?) split my gaff?—but you are too late, for now, it does not matter: nothing matters."

Major Boomer stood with bowed head for some seconds. He dropped his half-smoked cigar on to the stones and ground it, savagely, under his heel. Then, without a word, he turned and walked quickly into the house.

CHAPTER XVII: THE PHRYGIAN AS PRIEST

THE most tender blade of grass, bruised beneath the ball of the foot: a blade of grass bent under a bee's weight: sawn in two by the microscopic jaws of the smallest insect: food for caterpillars: a single blade of the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is not, will serve to split the everlasting marble of the courts of kings: will break asunder the very image in hardest porphyry of the oldest god. So, at least, the pundits tell us. Barbarism and the hosts of war have swept over the civilised world. Emperors have been dragged in purple from their thrones and slain at the hands of slaves. Libraries of wisdom have been burnt to unlettered ashes: peoples have been extirpated: tongues have been lost. The blood of unnumbered martyrs, of remembered and of forgotten creeds, has soaked and still sinks into the thirsty earth. Cities have been sacked, times without count, and empires decimated. Races have died out, boundaries have been removed, the very shape of the land has been changed by the rising or the ebbing sea. Faiths are forgotten: shibboleths pass. The gods have died, have re-arisen, and have died again. Only their images and their temples still endure, though there Samson pulls down the supporting pillar and dies under the fallen pediment, and here high explosive shatters Christ upon the altar and the groined roof. The houses and the likenesses of God, these alone last to be remem-

bered by Americans and to be destroyed in the end by minutiae: by a raindrop, by a millimetre beetle, by a blade of grass—and by Time.

All must pass: it is the Law: the tabernacle of the living and the temples of the dead gods. Even after a few thousand years, which are but as a day's span in the great age of Earth, a fragment of a mosaic here, a capital prone among the nettles there, alone remain to witness to an antique piety.

Once upon a time, the Ile de l'Escope, this place of the Watch Tower, this guardian island, had been a Greek colony. Before the good St. Louis had set out on his crusades from the port of Aigues-Mortes, away to the West: before the mob in Jerusalem had shouted for the release of Barabbas and the Colonial Governor had washed his hands in public: before Cæsar's legions had overrun the mainland: before Theban Pindar sang or Alexander set his face to conquest, before the Stagyrte had thought or written, or Socrates had drained the hemlock: the Ile de l'Escope was a home of piety and of the worship of the gods.

Little now remains of these many temples: the sea and the rain and the wind have worn away the lasting stone. The worshippers of a Newer God have thrown down the old altars and upon the foundations of the Temple of Apollo rises the fortified church of St. Apollinaire. Grass has split the marble and weeds have overgrown the ruins that remained, until now there is left but a few feet of a mosaic pavement to show where once stood the Temple of Aphrodite.

High up, upon the tallest cliff, whose face is sheer, so that a stone upon its edge, stubbed with the toe, will fall cleanly into the water seven hundred feet below,

lie these few fragments, buried in flowers. Here, once, had risen the temple to the Goddess. Slender pillars of the finest marble had upheld the roof: upon the graven altar had for ever flickered the undying flame: here the mosaic of the forecourt had been pressed beneath the soft feet of virgins, dedicate to Her worship; and inland, with the slope of the hill, the gardens had fallen away, terrace by terrace, in which the devout might wander, and where, on certain feast days, the passer-by, even if he were no more than a shepherd from the grazing lands below or a sailor off a ship in port, might, in the shadow of the myrtles, claim, in the name of the Goddess, her largesse.

But long ages since, the gardens had grown over with weeds and the myrtle trees had withered: the courts no longer echoed with song: wine-spilth no longer stained to purple the white flowers among the grass. The sunset no longer flushed the milk-white marble to rose and the altar stone was no more reddened with the blood of the slain kid. Here and now, the green lizards, the painted butterflies, beetles, fireflies and the moths of night alone courted one another in this broken and deserted fane. One who had studied under the Athenian himself, had graven for this temple of his native island, an image of the Goddess, and had here, in piety and for no reward in money, set it up. But now this figure, lacking a leg and an arm and with a mended nose, lives but dustily in a corner in a provincial museum, a matter of interest to greybeards who have forgotten, and blue-stockings who have renounced the Goddess in whose image the figure was graven; and a thousand years ago, the rose tint had faded from those marble limbs and the crown of golden hair had

been blown about the world in dust. No image to Aphrodite, here, on this day, in this year of grace, stood to steal away the hearts of men; save one mortal, fairer than any marble.

Upon the broken pavement among the flowers stood Yvonne, gazing into the round face of the setting sun. She stood alone there and still and silent; with her golden head sunk a little forward and her face grave beyond her nature. No vestal, once in service at this fane, could have been so fair: not Thais nor Rhodopis: not any Lalage or Glycera: nor Cynthia nor Lesbia nor Laïs: nor golden Danaë nor the Cyprian herself, were more beautiful to look upon than this patient figure, in this high place, framed in the splendour of the dying day. But no memory of this sacred spot stayed in the heart of Yvonne, and she ground in powder under her small feet the dust of the holy symbols, with as little thought of it as though it were of the common highway; for the mind of Yvonne was filled with thoughts far away from any old and pagan worship. She had come here into the once garden of love-laughter, not knowing whither she had come, nor with care for gladness, but in grief, in humility and alone.

She watched the round, red rim of the sun sink slowly down until it touched the crimson water. She was unhappy: she knew now that she had never been happy: although once, and not so many days ago, she had thought herself happy: happy to be with Paul, happy to be the Comtesse of Niverseine, happy to have so much money and so many beautiful things: to eat well and lie softly; to be admired of all for her beauty, her grace and her wit.

For this, ever since she could well remember, had

been her ambition: to be no longer poor and despised: to have wealth and with wealth that freedom and place in the world which wealth alone can bring. Of that place in the world she knew herself to be worthy: that no one, born to it, could fulfil the part with more ease or with a better spirit. It was a part that she knew herself, and had already proved herself, able to perform without any effort or hint of weariness: without dismay and without amazement. It was hers by right: she had—as it were—inherited her world.

Yet she had never been more miserable than now: not even with the Comte d'Aurillacq: not even when she had pledged nearly all her possessions with Cohenstein and had had to wheedle a paltry hundred francs to play with out of the like of Paul. She had all that she could have thought she might ever wish for, and, now, with a bank account beyond her dreams and a husband and a title, she had climbed up to this high and lonely spot to watch the sun set, to be alone with her thoughts, to be free to give way to her despair.

Wealth was hers: a place in society now was hers for so long as she wished to keep it: a husband (of a sort) was hers, or this might be remedied at will, for the world was wide, and, with riches, all was open to her. But with all these things, she yet desired what was outside her reach, the love of a man who cared for none of all these things: the love of one to whom her beauty was as nothing, or worse than nothing: who had no use for her wealth nor delight in her wit: one who cared but for the poor and the humble and such as were sad at heart.

Had she been poor: had she been even as she was before she had met Paul: had she had no fortune, he would have loved her better. He had said it. For he

was a man of such stuff as the saints are made of, with no pleasure in the good things of the earth, but only in the strength to renounce, to subdue the flesh to the spirit; in poverty, in simplicity and in truth.

The more she thought on John Paterson, the more saintly he seemed to her: the more to be beloved. Had she been poor and ugly, he would have liked her better. He had said that. The thought of this passed again and again through her brain. If only she had been ugly! No—she could not help being beautiful: she would not wish to be otherwise: for his sake; so that she might, at least, have something to bring him. But to be poor? Well, she had once been poor; very poor. Perhaps, if she were to be poor again . . . ? The thought stayed in her mind: obsessed her. Supposing she had the courage to do this: to renounce riches: to give up, freely, so much: to be, once more, poor and an outcast, of her own volition? The idea fascinated her. If she could achieve such virtue, would not then such a man as he was, love her for it? She sat down on a stone, which had once been part of the altar to delight in life and buried her face in her hands and wept.

The red ball of the sun had already disappeared into the sea and some of the colour had faded out of the water and the twilight had sensibly deepened, and in the purple sky one star and now another began to be seen, when Yvonne at last rose and turned to go back to the habitations of man. Down from the place of the altar, through where once had stretched the garden terraces, Yvonne walked slowly and with bowed head, and the ghosts of Pagan worshippers accompanied her down the crooked and broken way.

She did not see them as they pressed about her: or hear them as they talked to one another or mocked

her for her humble bearing, or cried out upon her for a traitor in her change of heart. The Elder Gods stood in her path, but she passed on, heedless of them. In vain that Priapus leapt out from behind a clump of wild roses to seize her: that Cupidon cried forlornly by the wayside: that Bacchus barred the way with his leopards, casting the wine-skins at her feet: that Apollo followed her and that Cytherea, as beautiful as this her once handmaid, stood in her path and called to her to stand. In vain, from among the reeds in the marsh below, Pan piped to her. She had no care for any of that gallant company: she sought other gifts than theirs: she was stricken with a fever against which they knew no medicine: she had become a neophyte at another fane than any one of theirs.

When she reached the house, it was already growing dark. She avoided Kingston-Pugh and Boomer, who were smoking and talking together on the terrace, and she only stopped for a moment in the lounge to say good-night to Lady Cantire.

Paul had waited for her coming in, upon the terrace; but he had been at the far end, talking to Cecily, when she passed hurriedly into the house, and so had missed her. When at last he went up to bed, it was but to find her already asleep and her eyelashes wet with tears.

CHAPTER XVIII: KATABASIS

MFABIEN PAVOIS sat in his private room before a large and complicated roller top desk and considered his accounts. They were good; they were better than they had been during the war years, but they still were not so good as they had once been or might yet be again. Next year he looked to be making a more substantial profit. This year, perhaps, close as it was upon the heels of war, with peace, indeed, as yet unratified, one could hardly expect a big return. Other hotels, in other places, were earning it is true great profits: they had no empty rooms: they were daily, almost, increasing their charges without the loss of a guest, and their *clientèle* consumed large quantities of champagne and smoked putative Havanas without number and at prices the very thought of which would warm the heart of any hotel keeper. But these were those who had profited from the war, providers of food and clothing for the millions who fought, makers of shells and explosives, of cannon and motor vehicles, of chemicals and disinfectants, of bombs and bicycles, of paint and varnish and horseshoes and housewives, of bobbins and ribbons and buttons and badges and buff slips and the thousand and one odds and ends ordered in haste and by the million. These gentlemen, however, with such fat pocket-books and so urgent a necessity to be living witnesses to their wealth, did not come to the Château Falaise, but stayed in Biarritz or Monte Carlo or Deauville or Aix-les-Bains according to

season. They had never heard of the Ile de l'Escopé, nor would they come to so quiet and remote a place even had they known of it. Fabien Pavois sighed a little enviously as he thought of this golden harvest. Still, although his own receipts were at the moment small compared to these others, yet these would pass, would grow less as the war receded and after the boom, came the inevitable slump. His profits, on the other hand, would tend to increase, as the shock of war passed and a more normal state of things began to prevail. If his present was not so prosperous as theirs, if he still had some rooms empty and not the custom which he had known before the war, he consoled himself with the thought that his future was more secure than theirs could ever be. On the whole, he felt that he had no real cause for depression, and, throwing aside his ledger, he was about to ring for a Dubonnet, which aperitif he usually drank in the middle of the morning, when he was interrupted by a knock upon the door.

"*Entrez,*" cried Pavois, swinging round from the desk in his swivel chair and facing the door.

Major Boomer came in. He shut the door carefully behind him with all the air of a conspirator.

"Good-morning, Major Boomer," said Pavois, rising from his chair, "what can I do for you? Will you please sit down, sir?"

He motioned the Major to an easy chair.

"I was going to ring for an aperitif. Will you do me the pleasure to drink one with me: a vermouth and a gin? A whisky and soda?"

"Thank you. Whisky and soda."

Pavois rang the bell and a little later Major Boomer was sipping at his whisky. Fabien Pavois waited for

his guest to speak. Boomer seemed ill at ease as though uncertain as to how to begin. He half emptied his glass before he spoke.

"I wanted to speak to you," he began, at last, "about a rather delicate matter, a damnably delicate matter; but I—er—thought you ought to know about it."

Major Boomer took a large, patterned handkerchief from his pocket and blew his nose violently.

"Yes, sir?" murmured Pavois, encouragingly.

"A delicate matter," repeated the Major, "you ought to know. The Comtesse de Niverseine . . ."

"Ah!" ejaculated Pavois.

". . . is not the Comtesse de Niverseine," continued Boomer. "She is not a countess at all. She is—er—nobody: she is a—a *demi-monde*—one of the birds. They are not married. His name isn't Fennimore, it's Bellamy. It's all a plant—scandalous!"

Fabien Pavois scratched at his chin. He eyed the Major furtively, with a troubled look.

"I thought I ought to tell you," added Boomer.

Pavois did not show in his face the very real extent to which this news troubled him. Some sign of his uneasiness he did show—but a sign, an indication only. He was used to controlling his emotion: it was a self-discipline necessary to his part in life. But, in fact, he was very much disturbed. In the first place, if what Boomer said was true, his own perspicuity had been sadly at fault, for he, more than any other, had taken these folk at their own valuation; he had, in fact, stood sponsor for them: he had even advertised their arrival. Not only was his own *amour propre* hurt, but he saw himself placed in a very awkward position. Then there was the question of Lady Cantire. She had taken up the Countess. She had run the Countess. She had

ignored her old friends in favour of the Countess—this so-called Countess. She would never forgive Pavois in the matter. She would never come again to the Château Falaise. Nor would her friends: she was a woman of influence, that was worse still. It was a damnable business.

"This is very serious," said Pavois, after a pause. "It is a business very serious. You say this, sir, but how do you know? La Comtesse de Niverseine has, perhaps, enemies? You say she is not—but have you, as you say, the proof?"

"I cannot . . . I may not disclose the manner . . . my source of information," said the Major, stiffly.

"It may not be true," murmured Pavois, a little less gloomily. "You may—pardon me, sir—you may have been misinformed. Madame la Comtesse is ver' well known . . . *c'n'est pas possible*. . . . Monsieur Ockrington himself . . ."

Fabien Pavois spread out his hands hopefully, but there was little hope in his heart. He knew, from the moment that Boomer had spoken, that he had been wrong, woefully wrong: that he, Fabien Pavois, and Lady Cantire and everyone had been grossly deceived. But if only the deception could be maintained . . . if only this fat fool had not . . . if no one else knew.

Pavois' train of thought was broken into by a knock on the door and the entry, immediately after it, of Pierre, his head waiter.

"What do you want?" said Pavois, brusquely in French. "I'm busy."

"Pardon, Monsieur, it is Monsieur Fennimore. He asks for his bill. Madame leaves this morning and Monsieur follows her to-morrow."

"What's that?" cried the Major, jumping to his feet, "the Countess is leaving?"

"Madame has already departed, Monsieur. She left for Port St. Simon half an hour ago. Monsieur Fenimore leaves to-morrow, I understand."

The face of Fabien Pavois had grown brighter. This sudden departure of the Countess simplified matters. It did not matter much now who she was. If only this man Boomer would hold his tongue.

"Major Boomer," began Pavois, "as the Comtesse is gone, there will be no need . . ."

But the Major did not wait to listen to the very sound advice of Fabien Pavois. He flung himself out of the room in a whirlwind of oaths, before Pavois had time to speak.

Paul stood in the middle of a room still untidy from the effects of a hurried packing. The bed and all the chairs were heaped with clothes and the floor littered with handkerchiefs and stockings and silks and tissue paper. He read the note, that Annette had just handed to him, with a gloomy face. It was scrawled illegibly and in haste across half a sheet of the hotel notepaper, and it told Paul, with a brevity that he found heartless, that Yvonne had left that morning in the launch for Monte Carlo and that Annette was to pack the rest of the luggage and follow immediately. She said nothing about Paul except to direct him to pay the hotel bill and to bid him good-bye. A cheque for 5,000 frs. was enclosed with the note. He crumpled the note into his pocket, and, leaving Annette to her packing, strode moodily out of the room.

He walked out on to the terrace. The place seemed empty, although Canon Fairmead sat talking with Lady

Cantire, Dr. Hanson and Cecily and the Vereker-Prynnes made a group about Lux, and Boomer was talking earnestly to Hooper in a corner.

"Where is the Comtesse, Mr. Fennimore?" called Lady Cantire, as soon as she had caught sight of Paul. "I've not seen her all the morning."

Paul stood before Lady Cantire and looked grave.

"We've had a letter from Niverseine, from Yvonne's mother, who is looking after the children. Marie is not at all well. I don't think there is any real need for alarm, but Yvonne is very anxious. She just threw a few things into a suit case and went off in the launch this morning. I shall follow her to-morrow."

"Oh, I am so sorry," murmured Lady Cantire, "so *very* sorry. I sincerely hope that all will be well. We shall miss you *so* much."

Paul muttered something suitable.

"Indeed, we shall all miss her," broke in the Canon. "The place will not be the same without her. So sweet a personality, if you will allow me to say so, Mr. Fennimore. She brought a breath of youth and simplicity and gaiety into what I fear is a cynical world. I am more than sorry to hear the reason of her going."

Paul escaped from Lady Cantire and the Canon but to have to listen to the lamentations of the Vereker-Prynnes and a further eulogy on the departed Yvonne, and before the morning was over he was weary of condolence over a sick child and the praises of a talented wife, to neither of which he had any just claim.

Almost everyone in the hotel, indeed, seemed filled with regret at Yvonne's going. Kingston-Pugh heard the news on his return from his bathe, from Lady Cantire, who called to him as he was crossing the terrace to the house.

"Kenneth!"

"Yes, Lady V., I'm coming."

He stood smiling down upon the old lady, a wet towel trailing over his shoulder.

"Have you heard the news? The Comtesse left suddenly this morning."

"By God! Boomer!" muttered Pugh, under his breath.

"Her youngest child is very ill," continued Lady Cantire. "Mr. Fennimore follows her to-morrow."

Kingston-Pugh frowned.

"Where's she gone to?" he said abruptly.

"Why, to Niverseine, of course," replied Lady Cantire. "Where should she go? That's where the child is."

"You'll miss her."

"Yes, indeed. I shall be very lonely without her," murmured Lady Cantire, fondly. "The dear child—so devoted to her children."

Kingston-Pugh found Paul alone after lunch. He went straight to the matter without circumlocution.

"Where's Yvonne gone to?"

Paul hardly noticed this use of a familiar name.

"She's gone home. Our youngest child is ill," muttered Paul, sulkily.

"Rats!" said Pugh, rudely. "She's not your wife, there are no children and no Niverseine. I know all that. Where has she gone?"

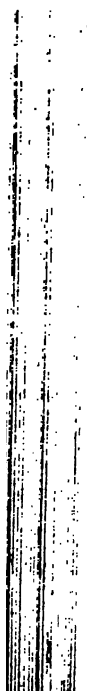
"Monte Carlo, if you must know," growled Paul, "but I'm damned if I see what it's got to do with you."

Everyone—even Boomer, who now repented his part in the matter—deplored the loss of Yvonne, with the one exception, perhaps, of Cecily, who showed no care in the matter one way or another. If anything, she

was glad of the going of Yvonne, which occasioned Paul's going also. Indeed, she won a material benefit from this hurried exodus.

"She left him behind, herself, and I hate the animal. I give him to you," said Paul, with no little bitterness.

So Cecily and Lux stood upon the stone jetty and watched Paul embark, very pleased to be left so happily in each other's care.



ACT III: NO BREAD

"Voilà un type, tenez, qui n'a jamais
voulu toucher son pinard, ni sa gnôle,
MÊME QUAND IL Y AVAIT DU
RAB!"

Gus Bofa.

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CHAPTER XIX: *YVONNE ENCORE EN PLEIN*

COHENSTEIN, sitting in the doorway of his shop in the Boulevard du Nord, saw her pass. He watched her until she had passed out of his sight around the corner at the far end of the street, and his eyes gleamed and his face shone with satisfaction. He called to his wife in the back of the shop.

"She has come back!"

"Who, then?"

"The Quesnoy. And she will be here again. I know them: I know her kind. They are never rich for long. She has either spent all that she won and is back here to gamble her last few thousand francs, or to work; or she is not satisfied with what she has won and she would try to win more. I know—they can never leave the tables for long. In the end, she will come back to me; and she won't get such easy terms as she used to have. Name of a dog, no!"

Cohenstein rubbed his hands together and thought happily of the day when Yvonne Quesnoy would again come to him to pledge her gold and her amber and her ivory, her silks and her furs.

Nor was this Hebrew pawnbroker the only one in Monte Carlo who was happy to see that Yvonne had returned. Monsieur Adolphe Rollin, in his large and airy shop, nearly fell off the high stool of his desk with emotion when he saw her come in at the door. She stood before him, clad in a sleeveless, white frock, which fell just below her knees: a frock such as the

Ile de l'Escape had never seen; and she greeted him in turn as an old friend.

"Oh, Monsieur Adolphe, but it is good to see you again. Since I have been away from Monte Carlo, my hair has never been properly tended. It has all grown wild—but a mere mop of hair: look!"

She raised her slender arms to her head, and, slipping off her hat, threw it, with a gesture, on to a chair at her side.

"Look, Monsieur, look! Is it not frightful? I have been but a little savage on a desert island for so long a time."

She shook her head violently from side to side, so that all the silken mass of her hair stood out about her head in a great halo; and the sunlight, streaming in through the upper part of the shop window, clear of the shelves of bottles, touched to a living flame every golden hair.

Adolphe Rollin came up to his most beloved client and passed his hand with a caressing motion over this aureole, pressing the soft mass down over the ears with a tender care, talking half to himself and half to Yvonne the while.

"Ah, but Mademoiselle should not have left it so long; she should have come to me before. Such wealth: such richness in tint: such a texture, should not be left uncared for. A maid is useless in such a matter: yes, to lay out a dress: to pour out water; and such-like common tasks: but to dress hair—and such a hair as this: it needs an artist. Come, Mademoiselle, we will see what we can do with it."

Yvonne sighed, laid her small hand lightly for a moment upon Rollin's white-sleeved arm, and allowed herself to be conducted to the chair.

There was the flat proprietor, with the so many chins and the head, smooth and polished like an ivory ball, who was also pleased to have Yvonne again as his tenant. It was now late in the year and the flat was still empty: he was even prepared to forget his anger against Yvonne for having so suddenly paid up her rent more than a month ago, and to usher her once more into her old flat, almost with the air of a father welcoming home a prodigal daughter. He even, in consideration of the season, offered a slight (and temporary) reduction in the rent.

She dined alone, on the night of her arrival, at the Café de Rome, and the head waiter left an American out of Seattle to be waited upon by an underling while he hurried across to her table. He talked with her for many minutes: now standing upright and turning an occasional glance behind him around the room: now leaning forward, with his hands resting on the edge of her table, and his head close to hers, talking, it may be supposed, of intimate and important matters not to be overheard. There was no doubt that he was delighted again to see Yvonne a guest at his board. She was looked after with a greater care than was any other diner in the café, and when she would have paid her bill, the head waiter himself was at hand to beg her to allow herself to be the guest of the direction this first night of her return. She must not be permitted, he had said with a fine manner, to pay for her dinner that night: he hoped to see her here often again now: and—not alone. He, himself, saw Mademoiselle Yvonne Quesnoy to the door.

Everyone, it seemed, who had known Yvonne in the past; many, who now saw her for the first time in this happy Principality by the Sea, were glad to see her.

Even little men, toilers paid by the hour, without any material ends to serve or any hope of favour, smiled upon her as she passed. The doyen of the guardians of the garden, a white-bearded patriarch, resplendent in his green uniform, who had spoken with so many notable people, who had seen through long years so many fortunes lost and won, talked with her beside the little crystal stream that babbles for ever under the palm trees: stood and talked with her for several minutes, his wrinkled face wreathed in smiles, welcoming her back to her estate. Upon the broad, white quay above the blue water of the harbour of Monaco, Niccolò, her particular boatman, who so often had sailed with her in his cutter, doffed his cap and brushed her white hand against his grizzled moustache as only a Neapolitan may, not only with the delight of one who has to work to live, in seeing once again an old patron: but in the joy of seeing Yvonne for her own beauty's sake: and had he not had a wife, sharp in the tongue, and many children to be fed, he would have begged Yvonne to come out with him in the *Papillon*, without any demand for hire, in order that he might, perched upon the fo'c'sle's edge, gaze aft upon Yvonne at the helm: so that he might feast his eyes upon that slender form, clad in a white jersey, leaning upon the tiller, her small feet wedged against the opposite gunwale for leverage: her head, bare of any hat, golden against the white mainsail. The tram conductor had a word for her: the woman at the kiosk, whose ill-fortune in life had soured her temper, smiled as she sold her *Le Petit Journal*: the negro porter, with his breast full of medals and his gay livery, outside the Hôtel de Paris, bared his white teeth in a smile, as broad as Africa itself, as she passed by; and little

Joseph, in the Bar Americain, danced joyfully about behind his counter as she sat perched upon a high stool in front of him, and made her drink a cocktail, specially prepared for her and at his own expense.

Two slender and elegant young men, in hats of the finest straw and coats of the most fashionable cut: whose boots were topped with cloth and whose canes were topped with silver: who wore rings upon their fingers and silk handkerchiefs of many colours protruding from their breast pockets: who carried, the one an orchid, the other, a carnation, in the buttonhole: who used the most costly perfumes and who smoked cigarettes in ivory holders, half a foot long, walked upon the casino terrace in the cool of the evening, and talked of the return of Yvonne with the utmost satisfaction in that event.

"She won much?" murmured the one, interrogatively.

"She won, certainly. But how much—well, one does not know: one only sees what she wins while one is watching: the rest is—talk. Without doubt, she won—a considerable sum. But as to how much, my friend? One does not know that. They say that they had to close a table: well, they always say that: you cannot believe these rumours. A hundred thousand francs—half a million francs? At least one can be sure that whatever she won it was half what folk say it is."

The two men paced the terrace for some time in silence.

"She has come back, that is true: but can she be of any use to us?" asked the other, at last.

"But, yes: certainly."

"If she has won so much money? Why should she . . ."

The other shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

"If she has won—she may still have spent most of it by now. Or, if not, she will still play again: and if she plays she will lose: she will lose all: she will go on playing until she loses her last counter. It is always the way."

"You think that?"

"It is certain: one cannot win twice: we have only to wait."

All at the Casino, the doorkeeper, the attendants, the croupiers, the cashiers, the management—it might even be believed Monsieur Blanc himself—were delighted at her return. Those in the gaming rooms who were but salaried officials were glad to welcome again a generous winner: the direction of the Establishment of Baths was pleased to see her for another reason: it was anxious to have its revenge, to try with her, once more, the fortunes of the spinning ball. It was wishful to see the current paper that she had won changed once again into counters and thrown upon the board: it repeated to itself the shibboleth of the young man in the cloth-topped boots: "one does not win twice."

She looked more than ordinarily beautiful that night as she walked through the long hall and in at the doors opening to the gaming rooms. She wore a sheath-like dress of black taffeta, cut low in the back and held over her shoulders with two threads of black silk, so frail as to seem hardly able to bear even that light weight. A narrow black ribbon was bound low upon the forehead, carrying in its centre an emerald, as large as a thrush's egg and as pure a green as the water under the shadows of the rocks of the Ile de l'Escape. She held in her hand a bag, made of black silk and brodered in silver, which was slung between two large rings of Chinese jade.

All those who walked in the hall; because they were out of love with play, or ill-used of Fortune and unready to tempt her further; or simply to walk and talk and waste time; or to watch others there; or to sit and make love upon the settees between the pillars; all these watched Yvonne as she passed through to the tables. And as the guarded doors swung discreetly and silently behind her, a little fire of enquiry sprang up in her wake. "Who is she?" asked one. "Is she . . .?" asked another, ending his question with a raising of the eyebrows in default of a noun. "To dress like that!" murmured another, with a shrug of the shoulders. And the informed told such as were not, who she was and what she had done. How she had once been poor, and—"well, what would you?": how she had broken a bank and was now rich: that she had won a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand, half a million, nay, a million of francs, according to the imaginative index of the speaker.

She passed on through the double-guarded doors unquestioned by the human Cerberi before them, who knew her well. She passed in to the silence of the gaming room from the noise of laughter and light talk of the crowded hall. As she passed down between the tables in this, the outer room, many turned to look upon her and some, even with money on the table, turned for an instant from the whirling ball, as someone at their side whispered her name. She walked through the room to the doors leading into the Salles Privées without looking to her right hand or to her left: without noticing at all those there who knew her: without seeing the delighted look of the croupier at the far table to whom she had thrown a thousand francs but little over a month ago.

She passed through the farther doors.

She took up her accustomed place at the left hand of the croupier. She arranged in little piles of hundred-franc counters the notes she had changed. Twenty little piles of white bone counters, with fifteen counters in each, stood at her right hand, in testimony to the fact that she had not come here idly to pass the time, but to gamble in the fullest sense of the word.

Twice the little wooden ball ran around its allotted groove and dropped at last into a number, before Yvonne upset any of the piles she had built or put a counter on a number. Then, very deliberately, before even the croupier had taken up the ball, she placed one hundred-franc counter on 17, three counters *à cheval*, on 16 and 17, ten counters on the *transversale simple* of 17, thirty counters on the middle dozen, sixty each on *impair*, *manque* and *rouge*.

Theorists will tell you that there is no system—no winning system—at roulette. There is a theory of numbers: there is a law of chance and of averages, and upon this the game of roulette is based. In the long run—for as long as 35 is two short of 37—the bank must win, and the player lose—in the end. By a laborious system of doubling up on the even chance, a guarantee against loss and some small profit can be assured, but the limit of the stake precludes the success of this system. The bank *must* win: it is, after all, their business to do that.

But in spite of the assertion of the mathematicians, the gambler still believes in the god of chance. If the ball has dropped into red five times running it is useless to tell him that by every law of chance and numbers there is still an even chance of the ball falling into red yet a sixth time: he won't believe you, and

down goes his money on black. The ball may fall twice running into 24: it is unavailing to persuade your gambler again to place his stake on this number or to theorise that the chances of the ball falling into this or any other number are equally 37 to 35 against. He will not be convinced, nor put his counter on 24. He will follow—as every player at roulette has always followed—some obscure system of his own: some unexplained, and inexplicable, preference for numbers: some imagined law in variation: the indications given by some accredited mascot; or he may simply follow, blindly, the play of others, who are winning or who have won.

Every player at her table had his or her eyes upon Yvonne as she spread her counters upon the board; and, indeed, she had now upon the table no inconsiderable sum, totalling, as it did, to more than twenty thousand francs. Even the croupier was startled for a moment out of his calm and muttered something under his breath: it might have been a prayer that this so great player might win, *en plein*, so that he should ask and receive a correspondingly big donation into his box, flourished under the nose of the lucky winner: it may, less likely, have been (if he were a faithful servant to those who employed him) a prayer on behalf of the establishment that she might lose.

But whatever it was, no one at the table rightly heard it, and he quickly recovered himself and began to spin the wheel, crying aloud the monotonous: "*Faites vos jeux, Messieurs; faites vos jeux!*"—and the players around the table, quickly or slowly, according to their manner, began to place their counters about the board.

The great fortune of Yvonne a month before was

known to most now sitting around this table, and many, regarding her as still the darling of the gods of chance, hurriedly began covering her money with theirs, so that the square of seventeen was unduly crowded with counters, and an old lady, in a sequin dress and heavy gold-rimmed pince-nez, who had had her twenty-franc counter pushed off the *en cheval* of 16 and 17 by another enthusiast for the place, very nearly caused a disturbance, and was only pacified by the croupier, at the last moment, pushing the counter into its place with his rake. Other players, of a more cautious nature, followed Yvonne's lead upon *impair*, *manque* or *rouge*: or more boldly on the middle dozen, on a column, on *transversale simple* or *transversale plein* or *en carrié*. Some thus put their money with hers on the lower chances and hedged with a five-franc or two five-franc counters *en plein* on a number in *pair*, *passe* or *noir*. A few bold and pessimistic spirits placed all against Yvonne; one, a bald-headed, fat man on her right, placing twenty francs on 34, a hundred on the last dozen and two hundred each in *pair* and *passe*. A few, put out of humour by the largeness of Yvonne's stake, placed no money on the board at all, but waited to see the fortune of the greater gambler, and to learn whether or no the luck was still with her, before they ventured themselves to follow or to avoid her lead.

"*Faites vos jeux—faites vos jeux*," repeated the croupier, more insistently; and then, as the wheel revolved slowly and yet more slowly and the ball left its circular course above the numbers to drop down upon them, "*rien ne va plus: rien ne va plus*," in sharper and more impatient tones.

The small ball of wood hopped in and out of the

numbers around the circle in a very active and friendly manner, as though he would declare to all present a fine impartiality: as much as to say that to him all numbers were the same, that it mattered not a jot to him in which number he at last rested and that, for the present, anyway, he was full of life and in no mood to settle down in a hurry. All eyes around the roulette board, except two, watched, with a fascinated stare, the activity of the little wooden ball, upon whose whim depended so large a sum of money: all eyes except Yvonne's. As for her, she paid no heed whatsoever to the arena in which the little servant of the god of chance followed his duty, but stared before her with a fixed gaze: not seeing any around her or even the squares burdened with counters: staring with wide open eyes at the would-be-young woman facing her, with the too-powdered nose and the too-golden hair; yet not seeing her, but seeing only the rocks and the sea and a face full of kindness and pity, of a great tenderness for her, but not, as yet, alight with love.

The round messenger of chance continued to hobnob, impartially, with a dozen numbers. Now falling into 23 and hopping out again with a great suddenness, as though regretful for ever having looked in there: coquetting with 31 and with 5: wobbling about 12 in a very suspicious manner, but, at the last moment, darting away with a renewed energy: lying for so long in 34 that beads of perspiration gathered upon the forehead of the bald gentleman, and then, at the last moment, shooting out in the very spasm of death and falling heavily and finally into seventeen.

No one spoke: no one moved. Even the croupier himself, in whom the man had long since been absorbed

into the machine, delayed his accustomed epitaph upon the dead: he was at least three seconds behind time with the three words: "*Dix-sept gagne.*"

The croupiers lifted the brass gratings under which lay the paper by which to-day man lives: in change for which he can be fed and watered, clothed and loved: aye, and be born and buried also; and together they made up the winnings due to Yvonne, and with their rakes pushed the pile of paper to her. The less fortunate in that they had ventured less had, very properly, to wait for service.

It was a large and wonderful array of notes that was collected together and pushed in front of Yvonne: seven and thirty crisp thousand franc notes and half-a-dozen hundred-franc counters: a very presentable sum of money to be earned, as it were, in something under three minutes.

No one said anything: all looked at Yvonne, to see how she would hold herself in such fortune. Had she cried out aloud—which would have broken the unwritten law of the place, but might yet have been excused: had she incontinently fainted—which might even have been commended—no one would have been astonished.

Instead of either of these evidences of emotion, she stared for a moment, dully, at the pile of paper before her and then, leaning forward with her elbows on the table and burying her face in her hands, sobbed brokenly.

CHAPTER XX: A PURITAN IN ESSE

IN any small society, and particularly among a few folk gathered together in a hotel, there is usually to be found one who, by force of character or by accident of birth, or of some other adventitious cause, becomes a keystone to hold together this society; a sun, as it were, around which the human system revolves. In the small society of the Château Falaise in the Ile de l'Escope, Yvonne had taken very much the part of such a central and necessary luminary, and with her going away a gloom fell upon this company; an interest that was common to the few gathered together, vanished, and the rot of disruption quickly began to set in. Although the Ile de l'Escope had never looked more lovely than upon the day Yvonne left it: although the sea had never been more blue and the flowers more fragrant: although a cool breeze tempered the noon-day heat and in the fairy pools the emerald water lapped softly against the warm rocks in a liquid cadence to tempt the would-be bather: although the round moon climbed up into the sky to light the terrace for the benefit of such as would walk and talk there, post-prandially; to smoke or to drink coffee: to be poetical, or but to make love: although the sun and the moon and the silent earth and the talking water together did conspire to tempt the traveller to remain, folk had already begun to consult time-tables, to pack their trunks and to call for their accounts. Yvonne had left hurriedly in the morning, and, in the afternoon of the next day, Paul went also in the company of Annette

and of a small army of trunks and suit-cases and hat-boxes. But before Paul's departure, on the same day that Yvonne herself had gone, John Paterson also ordered the hotel launch for Port St. Simon and put off from the quay at five o'clock in the afternoon, sacrificing, in lieu of notice, a day's charge for his room.

He told no one of the reason of his going, or even that he was about to go; he was discourteous enough to say good-bye to none, and, indeed, had shunned any company since Annette had given him, before luncheon, the note that Yvonne had left behind for him.

He read it again and again, with a puckered brow. It thoroughly disturbed him. "I go back to Monte Carlo," she had said, "to lose all my money at the tables, so that I shall again be poor, so that you may love me; for I know now that money has no value—is nothing." He was profoundly disturbed. This was madness—a midsummer madness, and it was his fault. This last consideration worried him hugely: he could not keep his mind off it. It was utter folly, and yet he was responsible for it. His conscience, which was the most active and dominant part of his nature, accused him of these happenings; put it to him that he had played the causative part to tragedy, that he (unwittingly, perhaps, but none the less actively) was stamping one who loved him back into the mire. These thoughts were torture to John Paterson. For an hour he paced up and down in the lower garden turning the matter over in his mind, growing more unhappy and distressed every minute; until, at last, he made his decision, and turning, walked sharply into the house, to pack his bag and to pay his bill and to look up the trains for Monte Carlo.

The day after Paul and his impedimenta were safely carried across to Port St. Simon, Kingston-Pugh also left the Château Falaise. Ever since Yvonne's going he had been silent and even morose and very different from his common habit of cheerfulness and common talk. He was brusque to Lady Cantire, impatient with Canon Fairmead and the Vereker-Prynnes, and rude to Boomer. He was not as discourteous as Paterson in omitting his farewells, but he performed them in a brief and perfunctory manner, which clearly advertised an absent mind.

Boomer followed Kingston-Pugh, to the open satisfaction of Lady Cantire; but the going away of Boomer was but a poor compensation for the loss of Yvonne, and Lady Cantire sat upon the terrace and politely stifled her yawns whilst listening to Canon Fairmead, and wondered how much longer she could endure the boredom of the Château Falaise. Whilst Lady Cantire was pondering upon her return to England: whilst the Vereker-Prynnes were considering if it was not now becoming too warm to stay longer in the South: whilst Canon Fairmead was remembering his canonical engagements and Dr. Hanson his work at the Museum: whilst Cecily was debating in her mind the vexed question of quarantine for Lux, and Hooper dreamed of Paris, John Paterson was rolling slowly along towards the Principality of Monaco in that train from Marseilles, the which, perhaps because the coast along which it runs is so lovely, never seems to be in any hurry.

Throughout the journey, Paterson's conscience gave him little peace, and by the time evening had come and the train had pulled up in the little station of

Monte Carlo, he was in a fever to see Yvonne: to undo the ill that he had done, and to persuade her to a more rational intention.

One very practical difficulty faced him as he sat at dinner in his hotel. He had come here to find Yvonne, to help her, to prevent her from any rash endeavour. But he did not know her address, save only that she was, he supposed, in Monte Carlo. But though Monte Carlo is not a large city, yet together with Monaco and the Condamine it holds a fair number of folk. Moreover, he did not even know Yvonne's name—or, at any rate, her real name. It was exceedingly unlikely that she would be staying in Monte Carlo as the Comtesse de Niverseine, and, except for her first name of Yvonne (which she might have adopted for the *Ile de l'Escape*), and that of Néomi (which her father had used and she had doubtless long discarded), he saw no way of tracing her. He could only hope that he might meet her in the Casino, in the gardens, on the terrace or in the *Café de Rome*.

With this thought in his mind, he left his hotel after dinner and made his way to the Casino. He did not at once go into the building, but crossing the square before the doors, turned down to the left and on to the broad terrace overlooking the sea. For a quarter of an hour or more he paced up and down with his hands clasped behind his back and his chin sunk forward on to his chest, staring with unseeing eyes upon the stones at his feet, and revolving in his mind the manner to be adopted and the arguments to be used, when he should meet Yvonne. Although his conscience had urged him thus far—to come to Monte Carlo and seek out Yvonne and save her, if he could, from so mad a venture—yet he saw very clearly that she might easily

put another interpretation on his coming nor readily believe his disinterestedness in his care for her. This view of the matter troubled him much and he dreaded meeting her as strongly as duty urged him so to do, but this dislike of what he felt to be his clear duty, only made him the more anxious to perform it, for there was that element in John Paterson's particular ethic that insisted upon the unpleasantness of right-doing: that he hated having to see Yvonne only confirmed him the more in his purpose.

At last he left the terrace, and, recrossing the square, sat down at one of the round iron tables outside the Café de Rome.

"*Une demi-Vichy*," he said to the waiter who appeared at his elbow, "*avec une tranche de citron*." He lit a cigarette and, presently, when the waiter had returned with the Vichy water, he asked for the head-waiter; for it had occurred to Paterson that this person (if anyone) might be able to help him in the finding of Yvonne.

The head-waiter stood before Paterson and bowed courteously, for he saw that he was in dress and clearly not of the tag and bobtail.

"You wish to see me, Sare?"

"Do you happen to know," replied Paterson, in French, "a certain Mademoiselle Yvonne: a lady, slender, with very fair hair?"

The head-waiter beamed. He saw a handsome commission in prospect. He rubbed his hands together and bowed again.

"But, yes, Monsieur: Mademoiselle Yvonne Quesnoy. I know her well. A slender blonde: she is charming. She often dines here. If Monsieur . . ."

"Is she in the Café now?" broke in Paterson, brusquely.

"Ah, no," answered the head-waiter, spreading out his hands. "She finished dinner an hour ago. She is at the tables."

"Thank you. That is all."

"Thank you, Monsieur." The head-waiter still hovered about the little iron table. "If Monsieur wishes me to . . ."

"Go! Go!" cried Paterson, impatiently. "That is all I want to know."

The head-waiter faded slowly away into the shadows. Paterson threw down his half-finished cigarette on to the gravel and ground it under his heel with an exclamation of disgust. He gulped down the remainder of his Vichy water and strode across to the Casino.

The long outer hall was fairly full of people, and for a few minutes Paterson wandered among the crowd on the possible chance that Yvonne had come out of the gaming rooms to walk for a moment or to seek refreshment at the bar at the far end of the room. But he could see nothing of Yvonne among the crowd that wandered in an aimless fashion up and down the floor and around the columns on either side. He questioned with himself whether he had better go into the gaming rooms and seek her there or wait here in the hall until she came out. If he went into the rooms, he would have to obtain a ticket to enter. Moreover, she would be likely to play in the *Salles privées*. Also, he had all the Englishman's dislike of a scene or any display of emotion, most of all at a roulette table. He decided that it would be a better plan to wait and speak to her when she came out. It was already past ten o'clock and unless she was playing to an unusually

late hour, it was not likely that he would have to wait for too long a time. He had nothing to do, in any case. He had no wish to play himself: indeed, he never gambled at all.

He walked across to an unoccupied settee between two of the columns and sat down. He would amuse himself while he waited by watching those who passed by him.

One is not likely to find a greater diversity of folk anywhere in the world than in the great hall of the Casino at Monte Carlo. Players at the table to some extent conform to a type, or at least to a selection of types; and the interest common to all: the watching of the behaviour of a ball, the delight in good fortune, the despair in losing, tends to reduce faces to (as it were) a lowest common multiple of the primitive emotions of hope and fear; of pleasure and of pain.

But, here, in the hall outside, the vagaries of a gyrating ball no longer hold men and women under their spell; or, at the most, only in retrospect. Also, many walk and talk in this lobby to the Temple of Chance, who have no intent to gamble, who are in the Principality because it is one of the most beautiful spots in Europe: who have come hither but to be able to say they have been to Monte Carlo: who are here because of others who are here, or may be here: who are here to play golf or for treatment at the baths, or simply to enjoy the luxurious accommodation of the Hôtel de Paris or the renowned kitchen of the Café de Rome. To begin with, Paterson had been but a poor spectator; he was too much busied with his own thoughts, too ready to regard himself as a critic of understanding, doomed to sit out a transpontine performance in which no good thing can be found. But

as the minute hand of the clock precessed slowly round the dial, and the same actors again and again crossed the stage before him, so that they became familiar figures, the thoughts that troubled him became less instant and he began to be concerned with those about him. He fell to wondering who these folk were and why, particularly, they were here: he began to study their faces: to note their action, and to seek in these material indices and visible signs, an insight into their lives.

In so cosmopolitan a place, in so democratic an age, at the end of a world war, when the social equilibrium has been so rudely disturbed, it were rash to be dogmatic about any one or to draw any conclusion from appearances, and had John Paterson been able to test the truth of his inferences he would have been not a little amazed.

The tall gentleman, for example, with the grizzled moustache, the military bearing and the eye-glass pendant from the silken cord was not, as Paterson had imagined him to be, a colonel of his regiment, but a naval outfitter from Portsmouth. The lean, young man, with hair over-long at the back and a scholarly stoop, who wore a coat of an exotic cut and a mauve waistcoat and who carried on his finger a ring mounted with a scarab, had nought to do (professionally) with letters, being, as he was, a subaltern in the Tenth Dragoon Guards. The stout man, in the ill-fitting suit of white drill, was not an army contractor or a retired hotel-keeper, but an authority on Coptic inscriptions and one of the first scholars in Europe. The apparent virtuoso was a bank clerk from Staines, and the seeming solicitor, with the sharp face and papers peeping

out of his breast pocket, was Sir Charles Ganton, the hardest cross-country rider in the home counties. The white-haired, cadaverous, ecclesiastical-looking man had never heard of the Oxyrynchus Papyri or the Pionian text, being Chairman of "Joy-Rides, Limited"; and the short, gross man, with the fierce moustache, was neither a confidence trickster nor a member of an even less savoury profession, but no less a person than the Marquese Palliodaccia and a *persona grata* at the Vatican. With the women it was less easy to be mistaken: they fall easily into types and are apt, in their dress, in little details of their deportment and in their *maquillage*, to advertise their place in the world.

It was a motley company that played before Paterson this evening in the hall of the Casino, and, so interested had he, at length, become in the performance and in his interpretations upon it, that he did not immediately notice, a few minutes before eleven o'clock, the little stir that was taking place about the open doors of the gaming room. He looked up, however, in time to see Yvonne standing in the doorway, whilst a doorkeeper, on either side of her, crumpled paper crisply in his hands and bent low before her with a servility that even princesses can rarely command.

She walked slowly up the middle of the hall between the double row of columns, her lips pressed together, staring stonily before her with eyes filled with despair. She held her small hands tightly clenched, the one upon itself, the other around the jade rings of her bag into which was stuffed carelessly a mass of paper, so that already a note or two fluttered out as she walked.

Paterson jumped up from his settee.

Suddenly she turned and saw him. With an in-

articulate cry, and altogether heedless of the many who still walked in the hall, she threw herself into his arms and burst into tears.

John Paterson was a kindly man. Moreover, no man born of woman could resist Yvonne when she wept. He held a consoling arm about her, while she sobbed on his shoulder.

"Dear one," he murmured in French, tenderly and in a low voice, "do not weep. It is all right, Yvonne. I can't bear to see you cry like this, for it has been all my fault. I did not mean you to do this: to be so mad: to lose all that you had . . ."

But Yvonne suddenly broke from him so violently that Paterson staggered backwards in order to keep his balance. She stood before him, enraged, panting, the tears still wet upon her eyelashes.

"Oh, you fool! You fool! You fool!" she cried, wildly, so that all in the hall turned to look at her. "You fool: I have not lost—I've won!"

Sobbing brokenly and without another look towards Paterson, she turned and walked hurriedly away.

John Paterson stared after her in utter amazement.

"Madame has great fortune," said an officious voice at his elbow.

He turned and saw a little man in a long-tailed coat, who had just come out of the gaming rooms.

"She has won much?" muttered Paterson.

"But, yes, Monsieur: they have had, again, to close down a table."

CHAPTER XXI: A GOD (LITERALLY) FROM THE MACHINE

IF the Casino of Monte Carlo is the last place where one would expect the unusual to happen, it may equally truthfully be suggested that the square harbour of Monaco is laid out to be the incunabulum of the unexpected.

Monte Carlo itself is a fairy city given over to the worship of the hazard: a toy town, designed for the entertainment of the idle and the rich: a stage, particularly furnished with properties to deceive the vulgar, to intrigue folk of a small imagination.

But if one walks down the hill from the square outside the Casino, past the Post Office, which so subtly in its architecture disguises its utilitarian motive, and on to the Condamine and the port of Monaco, one encounters an altogether different atmosphere; and if one is of a sensitive humour to react to the peculiar genius of a place, one may enjoy this harbour of Monaco in a manner unknown to the many who go to Monte Carlo.

The spirit that inspires Monte Carlo may be considered to be that in which trivial things are taken seriously, in which matters of no moment matter mightily. It is best and most adequately understood as the fane in which slaves are gods: a place, set apart and laid under a spell, in which to eat of costly dishes: to drink of rare wines: to believe to be permanent what is most transitory: to transmute spirit to flesh and

flesh to spirit: to gild the basest coin with an undying lustre, is the very proper and last duty of man. It is a shrine at which the artificial is natural: the useless, of use; the unreal, real: the false, true: a temple in which the painted cardboard is gold and silver: the wooden sword, Excalibur; and the paste, jewels.

But Monaco, or rather the harbour of Monaco, is of a reverse order, for, here, the natural is artificial: not the useless of use, but the useful, useless: not the unreal, real, but the real, unreal. It is a place of essential and primitive things which are, here, accidental and secondary.

The blue water that kisses idly the faced stone of the wharves is real water, and the wharves are real wharves with great iron rings let into the stones for ships' hawsers: and the lighthouse is a real lighthouse, a-flame of nights; and the cranes, real cranes made to work. But with all this, it is a comic opera port—a Gilbert and Sullivan affair; and the port officials, though burdened with very real duties, might yet be tenors or barytones, and the sailors, supers. In such a place as this, the most untoward events, the oddest occasions, might well happen. To this quiet harbour, square as a swimming bath, clean under the unclouded sky as a model in a museum, might come any Jason in search of a more than golden fleece, or the Wanderer from beyond the rim of the round earth.

In the hot sunlight, the white stones of the quay gleamed more whitely and the water below seemed of a deeper blue for each being placed against the other. No litter of merchandise, commonly found upon a wharf, lay along the quay; no ropes were looped around the stone bollards to run out over the quay's edge and to become a cause of stumbling to those walking along

the edge with head in air. No vessels lay on the water below to parade their spars and tackle above the edge of the wharf; no skiffs hung about the steps for hire, save one only. The quay lay silent in the bright sunshine. No rattling of chains or the cries of stevedores: no shrill whistle from busy locomotives, nor noise of cranes, broke in upon this wide silence. There was no ship or ship's boat moving across the still waters of the basin, and, save for a mongrel dog asleep in the shadow of the wall, the only living things about the wharf were John Paterson, and Yvonne, seated on a bollard, and Niccolò in his boat at the steps.

Yvonne sat upon her bollard, a slender figure clad in white, in an attitude eloquent of despair. She said nothing, but listened to John Paterson, who paced backwards and forwards before her, now speaking eagerly and rapidly, now stumbling over the beginning of sentences which were never finished, and again walking up and down, two or three times without saying a word, his hands behind his back, his head sunk forward, his mind busied with thought.

"I am sorry," began Paterson, after a silence longer than any before, "I am very sorry. . . . If I could have prevented this happening . . . but I had no thought that you would, that you could love such as I am, for I cannot return it; you must see that. It is impossible. I am deeply sorry for all this. If there is anything which I can do—anything to help you, you have but to ask me. But I must leave you, and you must promise me not to do anything foolish—you must promise me that . . . this folly of the tables . . . you must . . ."

Paterson's voice murmured on through the stillness, whilst Yvonne, with bowed head, listened to his words;

and so much was each taken up with the other and the matter in hand that neither noticed the entry of another actor upon this stage until he stood before them.

I was Paul Bellamy, in white ducks and a panama, very hot and excited, and clearly in an ill temper, as a man with a grievance.

"Yvonne," he began, at once, "I think you are treating me shamefully, abominably. I can't get a word with you, a look from you. You cut me in public. I am turned out of your flat. I . . . I am treated worse than a dog, and if it hadn't been for me, you would still be on the streets—or starving. This is the gratitude of a woman. To be treated like dirt. I left the woman I loved and who loved me—for you: to be thrown over now, to be used as long as I could be of use to you and then to be thrown away—like a worn-out glove. It's . . . it's *shameful!*"

Yvonne looked up, not unwistfully, into Paul's face.

"Dear Paul, I am so sorry, but I cannot love you any more. That is all. Forgive me—please. But yet, I have not been unkind to you—I have paid my debt. . . . I have now very much money. If you want more money . . ."

"I want you—you, Yvonne!" broke in Paul, taking her hand in his.

Yvonne did not attempt to withdraw it, but she looked up into Paul's face with tears quivering upon her long lashes and smiled sadly and shook her head.

But before Paul could speak again, the three upon the wharf were interrupted by Niccolò who came running towards them and crying out to them to look, and stabbing skywards with his finger.

These three, shaken out of the too earnest contemplation of their own particular affairs, became aware

of the material world around them and of a humming in the air, that grew every second louder and more insistent. Following Niccolò's gestures, they saw, high up above them in the blue sky, an aeroplane circling earthwards.

When first the talkers on the quay had looked up, the machine was but small and black against the blue dome of the sky. But while they watched it, as it dropped every second nearer earth in circles of diminishing diameters, it grew larger and yet larger, so that its structure could be seen, its two planes, its screw, as a concentric haze of air currents, its pilot and passenger, as dots, one behind the other; and, as it dropped, its colour lightened from black to brown and from brown to drab, and the noise of its engine deepened from the mere buzzing of a hive of bees to the sustained note of a threshing machine, to the more strident note of a circular saw.

As it circled lower and yet lower, until the very stays and struts of the planes became visible and the signs and letters upon its wings and fuselage, and the sunlight was reflected from the nickel plate of its fittings in points of fire, its wide wings flamed to white against the background of hills and the blue water, and the note of the buzz-saw deepened to the roar of a platoon of trolley-cars and then suddenly broke off, so that it seemed that all the world had, in a second, fallen asleep. It swept low over the head of Yvonne, and a second later lay upon the still waters of the harbour like some gigantic seagull that had forgotten to furl its wings.

Niccolò left the group about the bollard and ran to his boat; for here, at last, was a hope of custom.

Paul and Paterson and Yvonne watched Niccolò

scull furiously towards the seaplane. As he reached it, a tall figure clad in a brown leather coat climbed out over the edge of the cockpit and down on to one of the floats. From there, he stepped into the skiff. Even at that distance the figure seemed familiar, and before Niccolò reached the steps of the wharf, his passenger was recognised and Paul found his name.

"By God, it's Pugh!"

"My dear fellow," broke in Paterson, as Pugh came up the steps, "but this is delightful, to see you here, too, and to arrive like this. This is awfully jolly; we'll all have to . . ."

But Kingston-Pugh was not listening to John Paterson. He looked only at Yvonne.

"You had better come with me," he said, briefly.

He did not seem to expect an answer. He unbuttoned his leather coat, drew a cigarette case from an inner pocket, took a cigarette, lit it, and inhaled the smoke with patent enjoyment.

"Can't smoke while flying," he muttered.

"Come with you?" said Yvonne, at last, with amazement in her voice. "When? How? Why?"

"Your three questions are quickly answered," replied Pugh, coolly. "Anywhere you like; in that seaplane; because I love you."

"My dear fellow . . ." began Paterson, smiling at Kingston-Pugh.

"But you are mad, mad!" broke in Paul, rudely. "You must be a lunatic. To ask . . . to suppose that Yvonne . . . to . . . to . . ." He floundered and stuttered in his anger and his failure to find words to express it adequately.

"The lover, the lunatic, the poet," murmured Paterson. "Yet she is hardly dressed for flying, is she?"

and he looked down smilingly upon the slender figure of Yvonne, clad but in a thin, slight frock of taf-feta.

Pugh puffed at his cigarette.

"I have a spare flying kit on board."

Yvonne was gazing at him with shining eyes. She looked more her old self than she had done for several days.

"Well, she can't go, anyhow," said Paul.

"I do not see what it has to do with you," said Kingston-Pugh, coldly. "It is for Yvonne alone to say whether she will come or not."

Yvonne laughed softly.

"Mr. Pugh, it is very sweet of you to love me, to want to carry me away—*pouf*—like that. But, *je ne sais pas*. It is, perhaps . . ."

Pugh looked thoughtfully at Yvonne while she was speaking. Then he broke in with a question before she had finished.

"Do you wish to stay with Paterson?"

"I leave for Rome to-night," interrupted Paterson, hurriedly, before Yvonne had time to reply.

"Or with Fennimore—or whatever his name is—here?"

Yvonne shook her head.

"Or, perhaps," continued Kingston-Pugh, slowly, "you are waiting for yet another admirer of yours, whom I see coming down the steps."

All turned, at Pugh's words, to face the back of the quay, from which a long flight of steps led to the roadway above. Half-way down these steps stood a well-remembered figure. A short, fat man with a large, red face, the brass of whose Sam Browne belt, and the badges and buttons of whose uniform, sparkled in the

sunlight; who held his cap in his hand, while he mopped his bald head with a big, silk, khaki handkerchief and who smiled genially down upon the group below him.

Yvonne turned swiftly towards Kingston-Pugh.

"*Alors, j'è viens,*" she cried hurriedly, jumping to her feet.

Pugh threw away the stump of his cigarette, and, taking Yvonne by the arm, hurried her down the quay to the steps. By the time Boomer, sweating generously, had reached Paterson and Paul, Niccolò's skiff was half-way back to the seaplane with the two passengers in its stern.

"Who in the deuce is that she's gone off with?" asked Major Boomer, as soon as he found breath for words. "Looked like Pugh."

"Pugh," muttered Paterson, laconically.

Paul said nothing. He continued to gaze gloomily at the seaplane. The pilot had dropped a bundle into the skiff and now Pugh was helping Yvonne into the heavy leather coat. A moment later, he had hauled her up into the seat beside him: the air was rent with the din of the engine, and the plane began to slide across the water at an ever quickening speed. Suddenly, it left the water, cleared the breakwater by a few dozen feet and began to climb steeply into the air, not in circles, but in a straight line for the West.

The three watchers on the quay gazed at the seaplane as it grew smaller and ever smaller, until it was but as a distant gull and now but a speck in the sky and now altogether vanished.

At last, John Paterson, with half a sigh and no word of farewell to Paul or to Boomer, turned and walked away.

The Major turned to Paul.

"Damn Pugh! It was a smart get-away. We are not like to see her again."

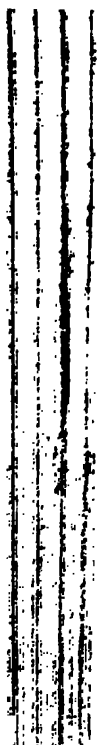
Paul tapped Boomer upon the shoulder with his fore-finger. He spoke slowly and with emphasis and in a more manly spirit than he had shown proof of for some time.

"My dear Major, you should know your Shakespeare better. 'We are not like to see her *like* again'."



FINALE IN A MAJOR KEY

Quam iuvat immites ventos audire cu-
bantem
et dominam tenero continuisse sinu
aut, gelidas hibernus aquas cum fuderit
Auster,
securum somnos imbre iuvante sequi!
Tibullus.



FINALE IN A MAJOR KEY

THE day was hot: scorchingly hot, even for Tuscany in August; and the white ribbon of a road which coiled with the slope of the hills, in and out among the vineyards, was inches deep in a fine, white dust. On either side of the road stretched the vineyards: the grapes had already flushed to purple, and these, together with the green leaves, patterned the red-brown earth with colour. Along this hot, white road rolled a carriage; yet, although the pace was of the slowest, the vehicle and the horse that drew it, and the driver on the box and the passenger within, were so curtained in a round cloud of dust that until the passer-by came within a few yards of this caravan, it seemed to be but a dust storm that was slowly approaching him: a little whirlwind in the road, opaque with suspended dust, proceeding slowly forward through some obscure tension in the atmosphere and without any solid nucleus. But, as this cloud came up to the passer-by, so that its edge touched him and the fine white dust began to lie upon his clothes, to tickle the membranes of his nose, to irritate his throat, he would see that this dust storm was but of a human raising, and begin to note the horse and carriage, the driver and the traveller who saw fit to journey so uncomfortably upon so hot a day.

The horse was a sorry animal: a flea-bitten grey with an ugly sore upon its withers: long in the tooth and broken in the wind: coated in dust and tormented

with flies. The driver on the raised seat in front was a large and very fat man, with a ragged, black moustache and a double chin, clad in a pair of stained breeches and a striped coloured shirt and carrying on his head a coarse straw hat, very broad in the brim and with no top to the crown, which defect had been remedied with a sheet of the *Corriere della Sera*. He sat perched precariously upon his high seat, with the reins (which had been mended with cord in two places) held listlessly in his hand, his head sunk forward and his small, sharp, black eyes closing continually in the beginnings of sleep. He might easily have fallen wholly asleep and off the box, had he not pulled himself up with a start whenever his head nodded to beyond a certain angle. On these occasions, he would flick the horse, that had fallen into a still slower gait, with his whip, at the same time making an inhuman noise at it—some sort of a groan, eloquent alike of ferocity and despair. The animal would then awaken for a moment into something approaching a trot, to fall a minute later into its old stride as the whip was returned to its socket, the reins lay slack again upon its back and the straw-hatted head of the driver began once more to nod upon the edge of sleep.

If the horse was but a sorry quadruped, the harness was in even a worse plight. It had been broken in many places and mended with string; and again broken and again so mended; and, for variety, the collar was held together with rusted iron wire, and, in places, where a complete strap or thong was missing, hemp did service in its stead.

It was a thing at which to wonder, that the conveyance itself did not fall to pieces even at this slow pace on a smooth road. For the woodwork had parted in

a dozen ways, the whole contraption creaked and groaned in complaint, which rose to a shriek and a clatter of despair whenever there came a rut or inequality in the road. Whether what was described by its owner, generically, as a *vettura*, was, in fact, a victoria, a landau or a barouche or some vehicle of an older period, such as SMELFUNGUS or the genial YORICK might himself have ridden in on his grand tour, is a matter for experts to decide. At any rate, it was a relic of a past age, and such as is seldom seen in these days of petrol and high speed.

The barouche—if that was what it was or had been once—carried a single traveller. He was a tall, thin, distinguished-looking man; clean-shaven, with white hair and a cleanly cut profile. Although he was sixty years of age he looked some years younger, and it did not need an unduly intelligent observer to infer that he was, or was once, connected with the law. For the rest, he wore a cool suit of white linen: a finely-woven panama: a pair of tinted spectacles with tortoiseshell rims to guard against the glare of the sun, and, at the moment, had spread over his face a fine, cambric handkerchief as a protection against flies and the dust. He lay back against the dusty cushions of the barouche, with his feet resting on the small seat opposite him and might well have been asleep.

Upon this road from Montepulciano to Pienza: in this month of the year: at this hour after noon, when the sun was yet hot upon the earth, there were but few travellers, and Theodore Beck, late of the well-known and highly-esteemed firm of solicitors, Maclean and Beck, had met or passed, since he left Montepulciano, but half-a-dozen wayfarers, peasants on the land, and for wheeled traffic, only a water barrel drawn

by a pair of oxen and the diligence, grey with dust, carrying two women and a priest.

No Latin logician—for the Latin races are alone logical in the practical affairs of life, in common and essential actions—has ever been able to account for the vagaries of the English in a manner satisfactory to himself. To dismiss the matter, easily, by dubbing them mad, is contrary to established fact, yet this action again and again bears witness to a mental defect. Why, for example, in this particular instance, should Mr. Theodore Beck, a man on in years, of no small wealth and position and influence in his own land, travel thus in obvious discomfort, in Tuscany and in August, to so unimportant a place as Pienza? It is true that some of the best examples of the work of Vignola and Rossettino are to be seen in this little town; but Beck was a lawyer, not an architect, nor was he connected with any museum. It is equally a fact that one of the first half dozen copes in the world—an unique example of *opus anglicanum*—is treasured in Pienza, but Beck was no authority on embroidery; nor himself a worker with the needle, nor even a collector. In brief, to supplant one mystery by another and deeper one, Theodore Beck was thus journeying to Pienza for the wholly illogical reason that he had never been there before: in the month of August, because a series of committees and commitments had proscribed his excursion in the spring; and in this dilapidated barouche, because Benedetto Arapaccini, now nodding sleepily above him, had bamboozled him into hiring the worst *vettura* in Montepulciano. That he should have been in Montepulciano is not so odd a matter, since, in the summer, it is a not unpleasant spot, placed, as it is, on the top of a high hill; but it

must be admitted that he had come there for the very English and wholly illogical reason, that no Englishmen commonly came there.

So Theodore Maudsley Beck, a man still of repute in the Metropolis for an acumen despite his years, thus travelled, half-asleep, towards the small town of Pienza. He might, in time, have fallen wholly and comfortably asleep, had not the sudden jolt of stopping thoroughly aroused him. The barouche had stopped. From under his handkerchief, he heard a pleasant voice addressing him.

"Scusi, Signore . . ."

He slipped the handkerchief from off his face and saw standing before him a tall figure in a white cotton shirt and a pair of flannel trousers. A broad-brimmed hat kept the face in shadow, but Beck had a glimpse of a pair of humorous grey eyes and a small mouth and a firm, delicately modelled chin.

"I beg your pardon . . ." began Beck.

The stranger laughed agreeably.

"I see that you, like me, are English. Benedetto saw me and stopped. If you could give me a lift to Pienza I should be awfully grateful to you. It's quite hot."

Theodore Beck was only too delighted to have the unknown as a travelling companion, and a minute later they were seated in the barouche together and jogging along at a better pace than had been achieved hitherto.

By the time the crazy carriage was clattering along the paved streets of Pienza some three parts of an hour later, Beck and the young Englishman to whom he had given a lift were firm friends. There was an air of good breeding and a natural ingenuousness about the man that Beck found most pleasing. In a short space

of time he had learnt much about him: that his name was Pugh and that he lived at Pienza, in an old palace which he had bought for a song: that he busied himself with the care of his vineyards: that he hoped some day to secure a vintage reputation for his wines: that he was married: that he thought much of his wife and loved her devotedly; and that he was the father of two children, a boy and a girl: both, as yet, quite young, but who already showed signs of being clever and beautiful beyond the common run of children. By the time they reached the town, Beck had so far fallen a victim to Pugh's charm that he had accepted his invitation to stay the night at his house rather than at the inn; and the *vettura* drew up at length before the pillared door of a large square edifice, with overhanging eaves, in a side street off the square.

Beck was ushered into a dark, stone-flagged hall very delightful and cool after the heat of the road; and, after the disposal of his hat and bag and a refreshing wash in a pillared basin that might well have been designed by the Pisan himself (had he worked in these parts), he was led down a long passage and into a tall, airy room, where his host left him alone for a moment.

Beck, accustomed to the too much furniture of the late Victorian decades, found almost a tonic virtue in this severity of decoration. The walls were of white distemper, without dado or frieze; half-a-dozen chairs: a large carved table: an ottoman against the wall and two wooden bookcases, painted white, were all the furniture in the room. The deep, narrow windows were open, and Beck, walking over to one of them and looking out, saw stretched out below him a vast panorama of vineyards and cornfields like a great chessboard, with here and there a black clump of cypresses or the

white square of a house, and, on the horizon, the grey and purple hills. A cool wind blew in at the window in spite of the heat of the sun, and Beck thought to himself that he had never known a more pleasant room or one better placed, and began to remember disparagingly his own stucco mansion in Wimbledon.

He had but barely turned from the window when the door opened and a woman came in.

Theodore Beck—although a bachelor, or, perhaps, because of it—had always been, and was still, a worshipper of beauty in woman, and as he now looked upon the woman who came up to him in this so pleasant room he regretted less than ever that he had accepted Pugh's hospitality.

She was tall and very perfectly formed; clad in a loose white cotton dress, wholly devoid of ornament. Her mass of silken hair, unbound by any fillet, stood out in a golden halo about her head. She wore no jewellery save a golden slave bangle on her arm above her elbow, and a fine chain of gold about her neck. Beck had lived sixty years upon this ball of Earth, and for the last forty years he had travelled much and in very strange places (for to wander was his hobby): everywhere and at all times, he had had an eye for beauty in woman; yet he was ready to confess that here and now before him stood one more fair than any woman he had ever seen. In one as critical and as experienced as Beck, this was a great tribute to Yvonne.

"My wife," murmured Pugh. "Yvonne, this is Mr. Beck."

She greeted Beck in a musical voice, with a slight foreign accent, which he found particularly delightful.

"Do you mind a nursery tea?" she said, after a few

commonplace remarks of greeting; and Beck had assured her (which was very true) that he loved children and would be disappointed not to see them.

The party in the nursery was voted a success by all. John, the younger of the two children, was, perhaps, too young fully to enjoy visitors, but, nevertheless, he chuckled merrily to himself most of the time, whilst Néomi, who was three and a half, so fell in love with Beck that there were tears at parting after tea, and she would not or could not sleep until he had seen her in bed and kissed her good-night.

Theodore Beck sat at dinner that evening between his host and hostess and regretted more than he had ever done before that he had never married. To be the husband of so lovely and loving a wife: to be the father of beautiful children: to live simply in such a spot as this, should be the whole of man's desire. He was more silent than was his common habit during the meal. Afterwards, he sat with Pugh out on the piazza. The vineyards lay below them under the cloak of night. Between them stood a terracotta jar—an amphora such as had once held the Falernian. Beck sipped the cool wine in his glass and puffed at his pipe in silence. It was a rough wine, but Pugh had apologised for it; he had said that it was home grown and pressed and not yet aged, and Beck had quoted, aptly and sonorously:

*Cæcubum et prelo domitam Caleno
tu bibas uvam; mea nec Falernae
temperant vites neque Formiani
pocula colles.*

But Pugh protested that he knew no Latin—or had, at least, long ago forgotten the little he had learnt at school. So Beck gave him the gist of it, and he admitted it suitable to the occasion.

"To-morrow," he added, "I will show you my few vineyards."

But the two men did not talk much. Some spell out of the magic night had, it may be, fallen upon them, so that to talk too lightly were a sacrilege in that place. So they stared out into the darkness, until a silvery glow grew in the east, and the shape of the hills stood out against the sky, and the round moon climbed slowly into the heavens and long moon-shadows lay upon the land. At last Beck knocked out his pipe upon the stones.

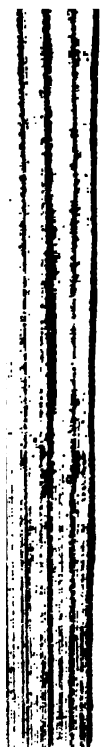
"What about bed?" he asked. "Are you a late person?"

"No, I'm an early-bedder," said Pugh, cheerfully. "Come along and I'll show you your room: you must be tired after that abominable *vettura* of Benedetto's."

Beck stayed a moment to gaze at the moon and the moonlit vineyards beneath it and, before he turned and went indoors, he quoted once again from a learned tongue,

"Δέδουκε μὲν ἄ σελάνα,
καὶ Πληῖαδες, μέσαι δὲ
νύκτες, πάρα δ' ἔρχεθ' ὦρα·
ἔγω δὲ μόνῃ καθεύδω."

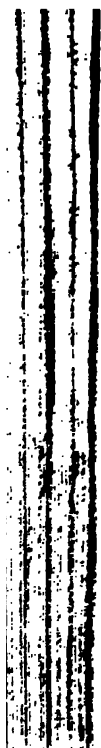
But he did not offer to translate it to Kingston-Pugh.



FINALE IN A MINOR KEY

Dictes moy où, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora, la belle Rommaine
Archipiada, ne Thaïs,
Qui fut sa cousine germaine;
Echo, parlant quand bruyt on maine
Dessus riviére ou sus estan,
Qui beaulté ot trop plus qu'humaine?
Mais où sont les neiges d'antan!

François Villon.



FINALE IN A MINOR KEY

HE sat lumpishly in the one comfortable chair in the room. It was an ugly, unwieldy chair, stuffed with horsehair and upholstered in what had once been a claret-coloured plush, but which was now worn away in most places to a whitish mauve of a sickly appearance. It lacked one castor; but by keeping the chair in its place, so that the leg without a castor rested on the folded newspaper slipped underneath it, some sort of a stability could be maintained. He sat in a heap in the chair and looked around him with an air of disapproval, which was very nearly one of disgust.

The shutters were closed across the window outside and held together against being blown apart by any puff of wind with a piece of rope, so that such little light as entered had to slip in between the downward-sloping slots of the shutters and through the crack between them, and the room was in gloom; for this room opened into the narrow well in the middle of the hotel, and to open the shutters of such a room as this was but to exhibit one's bedroom and all in it to neighbours opposite. Yet there was light enough in the room to see the things in it, and Paul began to take stock of these with a growing disfavour.

There was, to begin with, the bedstead: a cast-iron vulgarity, which had been lacquered in black, the greater part of which had by now flaked off. An attempt at decoration had been made in respect to two

brass knobs at the foot of the bedstead, only one of which now remained, tilted slightly out of the straight. An *édredon* in coarse, red calico lay askew upon the bed. The sheets and pillows were not too clean and it was clear that the bed had been remade after the departure of the last sleeper by the simple and expeditious method of pulling the sheets straight at the two top corners and patting out the creases here and there with the hand.

The wash-hand-stand was of plain deal, painted white: the jug and basin were not of a match, and the latter had been broken and riveted together with iron rivets in three places. A large and rickety wardrobe stood against the wall: it was the best piece of furniture in the room, being a passable imitation of mahogany, and it carried a long mirror still in a serviceable state. But the door lacked a latch, and, as the wardrobe was tilted forward, the door would have swung open by gravity and was only kept closed with a wedge of paper; and the means of hanging clothes within rested in a row of enamelled iron hooks, screwed into the side and back of the wardrobe. Two cane-bottomed chairs and a small, yellow-varnished table completed the furniture of the room: a worn and faded carpet covered half the floor, and a single electric lamp hung nakedly without a shade from the centre of the ceiling.

Paul Bellamy looked about him and sighed. He remembered the last time that he had stayed in Monte Carlo—a short five years ago—and he pictured in his mind, with a very painful clearness and reality, the bedchamber that he had slept in then.

It had been a large, and very pleasant room lighted with three windows: two of which opened on to the

sea, of which one was a deep bay window with a broad settee piled with multicoloured cushions and big enough for two to coil themselves upon it. The wardrobes had been of mahogany, inlaid with a lighter wood, and fitted with polished brass. The dressing-table was a large oval upon four slender and tapering legs, and carried a centre and two side mirrors, all turning easily upon their swivels and capable of being fixed at any required angle. There had been no wash-hand-stand, but instead a bathroom, opening out from the bedroom: not a mere cabinet of a room, but a room half the size of the bedroom itself, in which the bath (though broad and deep beyond the common run of baths) looked small in a corner. And the bath had been no cheap one, but very finely enamelled and fitted with nickel fittings of the latest pattern and a perforated tray for soaps and sponges and a thermometer in a wooden case and a long-handled wooden brush for scrubbing one's back: and there had been a shower bath in the room, apart from the simple bath, with a marble base to stand in and a mackintosh curtain to drape around one, whilst the shower was on. There were hollow rails, with the hot water circulating through them, upon which to warm the towels; and perforated cork mats and woolly bath mats and a score of useful and elegant aids to keeping clean. There had been the bed. A great bed, built in solid mahogany. A bed, canopied in rose-coloured silk, with brocaded silk curtains on either side of the head, caught back to the bedpost with crimson sashes. The counterpane had been of shell pink, with a white, net bedspread above it. The pillows were so soft that to rest one's head upon them was already to be asleep and the sheets were of the finest linen and very smooth and cool to the touch. Furs and

costly raiment had filled the wardrobes: silks and cambrics had loaded the drawers. Gold and silver and ivory: grotesque vessels in glass and alabaster had crowded the dressing tables. And in the great bed itself had lain the most beautiful possessor of all these so many beautiful things—Yvonne herself.

Only five years ago!

Paul sighed heavily, and throwing himself yet further back in his chair, shifted the leg without a castor off its wad of paper, so that the chair now wobbled upon three legs and beat a tattoo upon the floor with every movement that Paul made.

At length, throwing off his depression with an effort, Paul jumped up and began to unpack his bag. He laid a suit of dress clothes out upon the bed with care: for, although they were no longer new, yet they were all he had, nor could he well afford twenty guineas for new ones. He laid a dress shirt (that had been worn once) beside the coat and trousers. He laid out his soap and sponge and flannel, poured himself out some cold water into the cracked basin, and began to wash.

Half an hour later he walked out of the Hôtel Beaur in a slightly better spirit than when he had entered it. To be in dress improves the morale of the most poor in spirit, and, although Paul's clothes were darned in places and glossy in others: although his shirt had been ill-laundered: although his patent-leather boots were cracked and dull: although he wore but a soft hat and a light grey overcoat with his evening clothes, yet he made his way down towards the Casino with something of an air.

When, five years ago from now, Paul had first come to the Principality, he had been shaved upon his arrival by the barber attached to his hotel. While he was

being shaved he had chatted with the barber, telling him, amongst other things, that he had but just been demobilised. The barber had paused, razor in air, and had made a remark which Paul remembered ever afterwards, and which, indeed, deserved to be remembered. He had said, with all the sorrow and disillusion of the Latin philosopher in his voice:

"Ah, Monsieur: après la démobilisation commence la lutte."

After demobilisation the struggle begins. The truth of this was borne very forcibly upon Paul at this moment, when he could look back upon five years of post-bellum peace. Upon his return to London, the real struggle had, indeed, begun. In the first place, his patrimony of £300 a year had now depreciated to £100 a year. It is true that Erskine & Garrett took him back as a reader and paid him £200 a year for his services; but he found a difficulty these days in earning more than an odd fifty a year or so in free lance journalism: the market for the science which he could write being already heavily overstocked. His total income thus stood at about £350 a year: a sum which, in purchasing power, represented but half of its value before the war. But there were other causes to make these after-war years bitter to Paul, beside this material diminution in real income. While he had been in the Army, he had commonly been in the company of those richer than himself: his expenses in the field being naturally small, he found himself at every leave with a large balance in the bank: to spend a hundred pounds in a week became a habit with him: he cultivated quickly a taste for luxury. Upon his demobilisation, with a substantial gratuity to spend, he had acquired a wider experience of the ways of living than

was necessary or wise in one of his slender means; and then there had been Yvonne, whom he had never forgotten. Paul Bellamy was not a man to save or to make money. He yearly spent as much, or a little more, than he made, but after five years of mean living in Bloomsbury, he found himself (owing to an unexpected piece of hack work) with one hundred pounds to his account.

He decided to devote this sum of money to a purpose which he had long cherished: to come once more to Monte Carlo: once again to put his money on a number: to meet, maybe, yet another Yvonne, and to attempt his fortune—and hers. But upon this occasion he could not afford his old hotel: already, although he had travelled third-class in crowded discomfort, his journey hither had eaten up money: he needed all the balance for the tables. So he put up in a mean hotel in a back street, and sighed at the memories of happier days.

But as he walked down through the gardens and reached the square before the Casino his spirits rose: he even swung his cane jauntily, and he turned into the Café de Rome with a fair assumption of his war-time manner.

A waiter bustled forward as he entered the room. "Was Monsieur alone?" Paul said that he was, and was led to a table by the wall. It was not so good a table as the one at which he had been used to sit before, but he yet had from it a view of the room. He ordered *hors d'œuvre* and a bottle of *Sauterne* and began to look about him.

The café was moderately full, but the table by the pillar, at which Paul had first spoken with Yvonne, was still empty. It fascinated him: it held his regard

beyond all the other tables in the room: he could not take his eyes off it.

The waiter carried away the many dishes of *hors d'œuvre* and brought the *omelette* which Paul had ordered; and the *omelette* had given place to a *tournedos* before Paul's watch upon the empty table was rewarded. A slight figure had appeared suddenly from around the column and had sat down at the empty table.

Paul gazed at her with wide-open eyes. A strange thrill of delight ran through his body: a sense of adventure overwhelmed him. He felt once again as he had not felt for five long years—as one with worlds to conquer: as one upon the threshold of adventure: as one with the will to live. He continued to gaze earnestly at the girl of the table by the pillar.

Her slender form was draped in the palest yellow. Her black hair was parted in the middle and brought down upon either side low over her ears, and coiled in a great knot upon the nape of her neck. Had her hair been loosened and allowed to fall freely it would have covered her as in a mantle and might well have fallen below the knee. A bracelet of dark green jade encircled her left wrist and a necklace of jade beads was looped around her throat: but save for these, and an opal ring, she wore no jewellery. Her face was small and elfish: her grey eyes filled with mystery: her skin was alabaster and her small red lips were as twin red rosebuds laid upon the petal of a water-lily.

Paul caught the eye of a waiter.

"Yes, sare?"

"*Le maître d'hôtel.*"

"*Mais oui, Monsieur.*"

The head waiter stood at Paul's table, bending a little stiffly towards him.

"You asked for me, sare?" There was a certain coldness, almost of reproof, in the head waiter's tone of voice, which may have been due to the modest nature of Paul's dinner or the shabbiness of his dress clothes, or to both these together.

The head waiter had not changed perceptibly: five years in the fifties makes but little difference in the appearance of a man. Perhaps his hair was a little more grizzled: the lines around the mouth and eyes a little more deeply marked: the waist a few inches more in circumference: the skin a shade, or half a shade, darker in tint. But he still looked, as he had looked for the past ten years, very hierarchial.

"You wish something, sare?" he asked.

"The lady in yellow, there, by the pillar: is she . . . ?" and Paul shrugged his shoulders in a question.

The face of the head waiter brightened perceptibly. It was a question to which he knew the appropriate answer. He used a phrase which had become familiar to him through the use of many years. He always considered it a very happy phrase.

"Mais oui, Monsieur: elle cherche sa fortune."

"I sincerely hope she finds it," murmured Paul to himself, and aloud to the head waiter: "Will you then kindly ask her if she will do me the pleasure of dining with me? For I see she has only just sat down."

The head waiter beamed quite amicably upon Paul. He saw a demand for champagne and an extended menu in this invitation. He did not remember Paul in any way—even in this repeated accident. Although these five years had made more difference in Paul than in him, so that Paul was altogether stouter and coarser looking, and most of the gloss had gone from his hair, and his skin had lost its freshness, and there were

wrinkles about the eyes, yet he might well have recognised him, had not the number of folk passing through the Café de Rome in five years been so great and so varied as easily to cloud the memory. Or perhaps, he had remembered, but had been too tactful to show any sign of it?

"She will be charmed, Monsieur, surely," he murmured, and he bowed and turning round, began to thread his way between the tables towards the girl in the yellow dress. Paul poured out the remainder of his *Sauterne* and drained the glass in two gulps. He forgot the state of his clothes: the amount of his assets: the remembrances of five years. He was once more the darling of fortune: the beloved of the elder gods: the chosen of Venus. He rose from his chair and bowed with no little grace as the head waiter and the girl in yellow stood by his table.

"Mademoiselle Lucienne Déclat," murmured the head waiter.

"*Voulez-vous me donner le plaisir de dîner avec moi?*" began Paul. "*Il faut m'excuser parceque je parle français si mal . . .*"

Mademoiselle Déclat smiled upon Paul.

"*Monsieur, vous êtes trop aimable; mais oui, je dînerai avec grand plaisir; et je désirerais pouvoir parler anglais aussi bien que vous parlez français. Malheureusement, je ne peux parler qu'un peu d'anglais: quelques mots seulement: yes, a few word, zat is all, hélas!*"

"Mademoiselle Lucienne speak English ver' well," murmured the head waiter, "she is too modest. *Mais ça ne fait rien au Monsieur, qui parle français comme un parisien.*"

"*Le menu,*" demanded Paul.

"Oui, Monsieur."

"Et la carte des vins."

"Bien, Monsieur."

Five minutes later Paul had ordered a little dinner for Lucienne of a kind that even the head waiter fully appreciated, whilst the wine waiter, wreathed in smiles, opened a bottle of the Widow with due ceremony, and directed an underling as to the proper arrangement of the tripod and the ice-bucket.

"Vous jouez,—Lucienne?" asked Paul, as soon as things were comfortably settled and the staff had departed.

"Mais oui: je l'adore."

"Nous irons là ensemble, après dîner," said Paul, sipping at his champagne and devouring Lucienne with his eyes over the rim of his glass.

Lucienne let her hand fall to her side and across towards Paul upon her left. Her fingers closed tightly upon his.

"Chéri!" she murmured, ecstatically.

* * * * *

Paul sat beside Lucienne at the end of the table. A long rake lay at her left hand, and, at her right, a small pile of counters, the change of a thousand franc note which had once been Paul's.

"You do not play?" Lucienne had asked. And Paul had assured her that he but wished her to play: that his money was hers to play with; and that if she won, she would surely be generous.

The ball spun around its allotted path. The monotonous voice of the croupier prayed the players to make their stakes.

"Quel numéro?" whispered Lucienne to Paul.

"Ce que vous voulez," muttered Paul.

The ball began to travel perceptibly more slowly, but before the croupier closed the putting on of money, Lucienne had pushed with her rake a hundred franc counter over upon six: two hundred francs on the first dozen: three hundred francs on *manque* and the remaining four hundred francs on *pair*. "*Rien ne va plus*," cried the croupier, and the ball began to move slowly and yet more slowly, but still within the groove above the numbers. Suddenly, with a spasmodic leap out of the groove and across half of the wheel, the ball fell into twenty-nine without an attempt at any other number.

"*Vingt-neuf gagne*," said the croupier, dispassionately, thrusting out his rake and collecting the counters spread about the board.

"Ah, but I 'ave ze bad luck," murmured Lucienne.

Paul slipped a thousand franc note from his pocket-book and pushed it over to the croupier.

"*Change-ça!*" he cried, hoarsely. Once more the ball was in motion.

Lucienne took up the counters in her slender fingers. She eyed the numbers on the board, hesitant.

"*Dix-sept*," whispered Paul. His hand shook: beads of sweat glistened on his forehead.

"*Bien, mon ami*," murmured Lucienne, gaily.

She put a hundred francs on seventeen: two hundred francs *en cheval* on sixteen and seventeen and the rest upon *manque* and *impair*.

Paul sat rigidly, with wide eyes staring at the spinning ball, as though he had been turned by some Medusa into stone.

The ball this time showed a more catholic humour: it coquetted with almost every number upon the board. Twice it fell in and out of seventeen, whilst Paul's

nails bit deep into the palm of his tightly-clenched hand. Then, at last, it rolled lazily, as though tired out with so many vicissitudes, into thirty-six.

"*Encore, la mauvaise fortune!*" laughed Lucienne, with a shrug of her ivory shoulders.

Paul said nothing. He sat very still and his face was white. At last, he took his pocket-book and counted out seven hundred-franc notes on to the table.

"*Voilà: c'est tout ce que j'ai,*" he muttered, as he put the empty pocket-book back into his pocket.

* * * * *

Cohenstein spread out the clothes upon his counter. The shop was in deep gloom. He switched on an electric lamp which hung low above the board, so as to examine closely the things placed there. There was a suit of dress clothes, very shabby and shiny: a tweed suit in a somewhat better state: a pair of patent leather boots, cracked at the toe: a not too clean panama hat and a silver mounted cane. In a little heap by themselves lay a silver wrist watch, a cigarette case and a signet ring.

"How much will you give?" demanded Paul.

Cohenstein shrugged his shoulders, spread out his hands and sniffed disparagement.

"Ze clothes—they are no value: von hundred francs: ze stick, twenty: ze watch, fifty: ze cigarette case, thirty: and ze ring, seventy. *Alors*, two hundred and seventy francs, ze lot."

"It's a damned swindle," growled Paul.

Cohenstein shrugged his shoulders to an even greater elevation. "Eet is a fair price; if Monsieur is not satisfied, 'e can go otherwhere."

"I suppose I've got to be thankful that I bought a

return ticket," he muttered to himself. "Very well, I suppose I must take your price."

"Eet is a good price," murmured Cohenstein, blandly.

Paul stuffed the notes into his pocket and walked gloomily out of the shop. Across the road stood a small café. He went in, and, sitting down at an iron table with an imitation marble top, ordered a gin and vermouth. He felt in need of a stimulant.

While he sipped at his drink, he glanced idly through the pages of the Continental edition of the *Daily Mail*, which lay upon the table. A headline caught his eye:

HAS VENUS A SATELLITE?
REPORTED DISCOVERY
BY JAPANESE ASTRONOMER.

But the matter did not interest him. No chord of memory vibrated in his brain. He had forgotten much. He threw down the paper without reading it further: emptied his glass, and strode out of the café and to his hotel to pack his bag. He would forget all: he was concerned now more with livelihood than with life: Goddess, Planet or Mortal, he had no longer any thought of VENUS.

THE END



